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JANUARY 2007 NO. 83

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make-ahead
meat ragùs

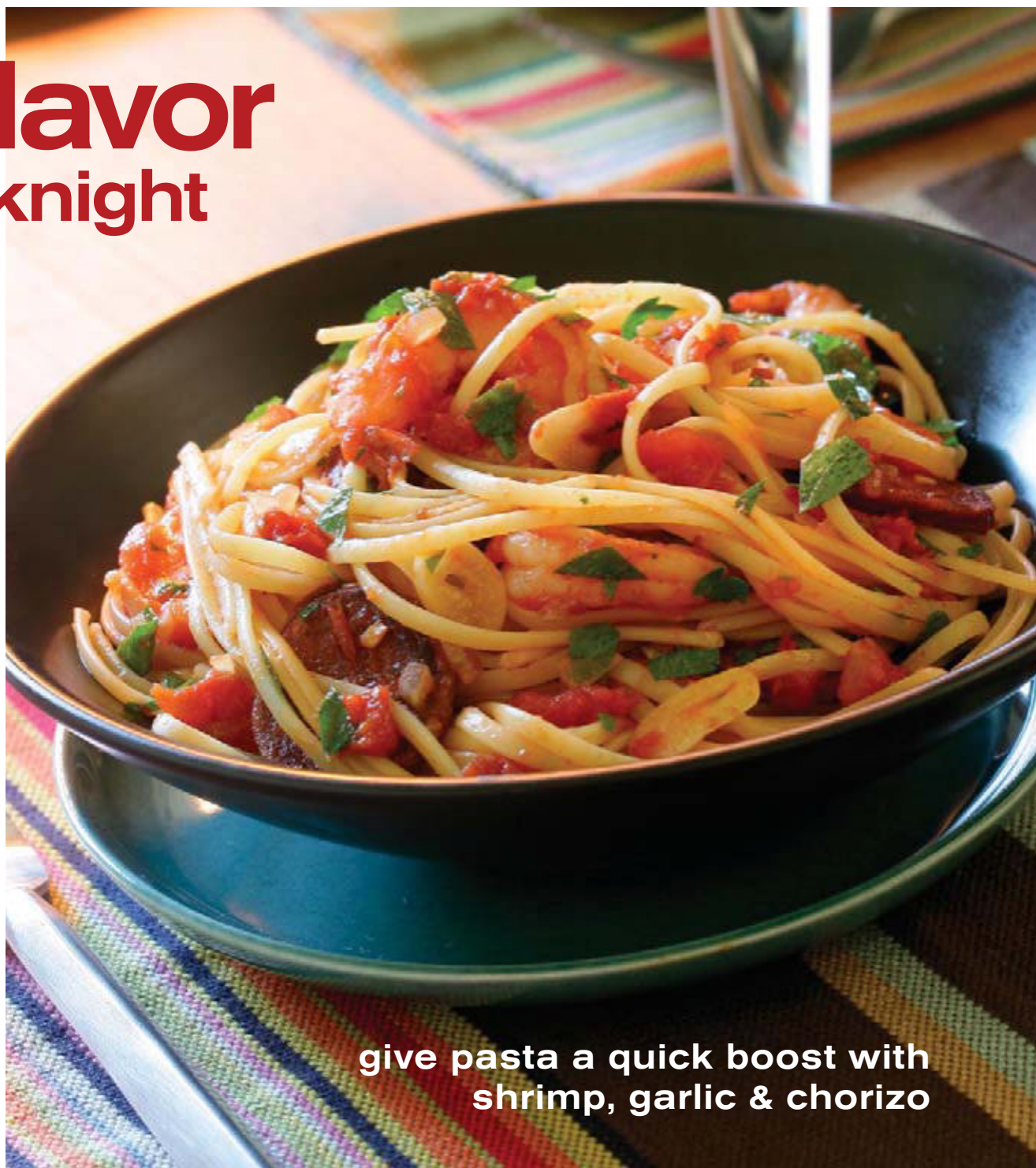
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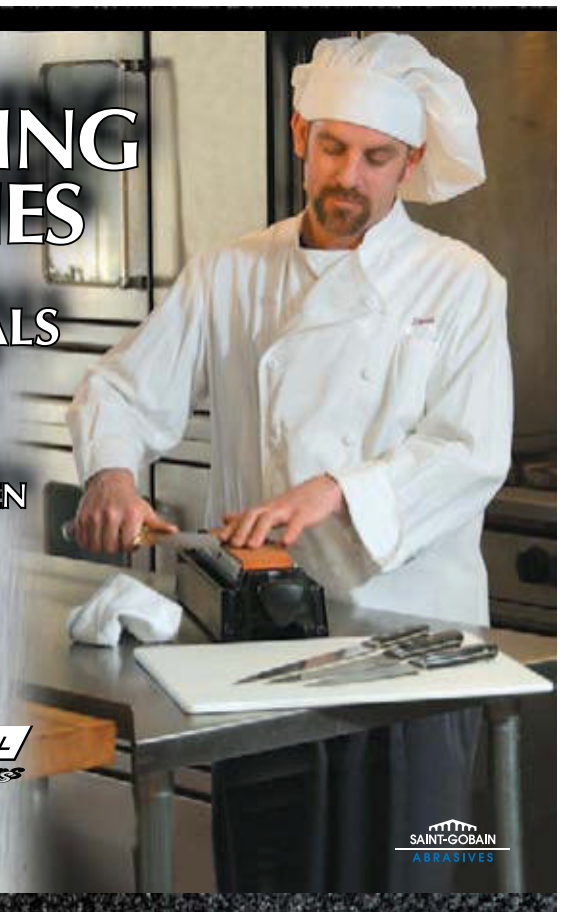
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JANUARY 2007 ISSUE 83



ON THE COVER

82a **Quick & Delicious**
Seven dishes for weeknight
suppers or weekend company



Linguine with Shrimp & Chorizo

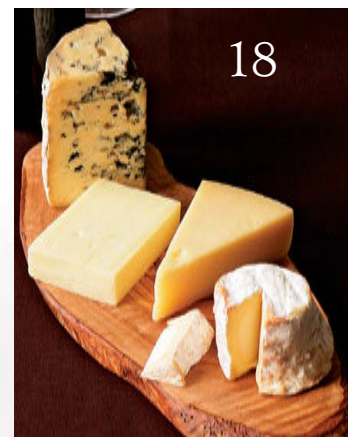
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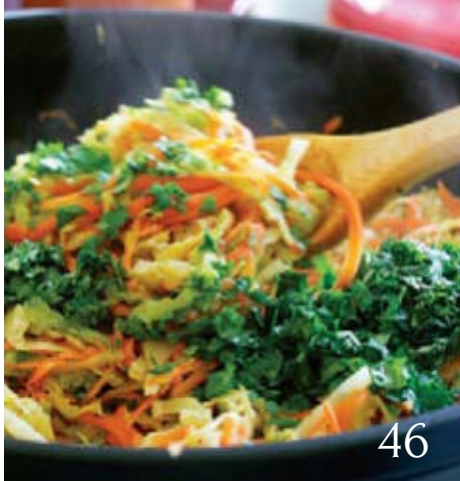
UP FRONT

- 6 Index
- 8 Menus
- 10 Letters
- 14 Links
- 16 Contributors
- 18 Great Finds
American cheeses
- 20 In Season
Cauliflower
- 22 Q&A
- 24 Artisan Foods
Sea-salt caramels
- 26 Enjoying Wine
Break out of
your wine rut
- 28 Equipment
 - ❖ Silicone update
 - ❖ Palm peeler
 - ❖ Crêpe pans
 - ❖ Rice cookers
- 32 Food Science
Melting cheese
- 36 Readers' Tips



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46



55



58



62

FEATURES

38 COOKING AHEAD

Roast Chicken
for Today and Tomorrow

Roast two chickens; serve one on Sunday and turn the other into terrific weeknight meals
by Tony Rosenfeld

44 Crowd-Pleasing Crispy Potatoes

With a short ingredient list and a mostly make-ahead technique, these potatoes are perfect for parties
by Susie Middleton

46 Indian-Style Vegetable Stir-Fries

A few sassy spices and a simple one-pan technique are all you need to create these flavorful side dishes
by Suvir Saran

50 How to Host a Tasting Party

Get to know your palate and discover the chocolates, cheeses, and olive oils you love
by Dina Cheney

55 A Sweet Treat That's Easy to Make

This delicious apple dessert will make you feel like a brilliant pastry chef when you serve it
by Kimberly Y. Masibay

58 The Best Ragùs

The secret? Braise the meat on the bone first, then shred it, chop it, and mix it back into the rich sauce
by Biba Caggiano

62 COOKING WITHOUT RECIPES

Frittata: An Italian Omelet

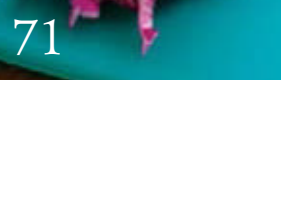
Make dozens of different frittatas with the ingredients you like the best
by Joyce Goldstein

66 Pound Cake, Perfected

A couple of little tweaks make this classic butter cake moister, richer, and better than ever
by Nicole Rees



70



IN THE BACK

70 From Our
Test Kitchen

- ❖ Indian spices
- ❖ Boiling eggs
- ❖ Shredding cabbage
- ❖ Sherry vinegar
- ❖ Following recipes

74 Tasting Panel
Prepared pesto

76 Where To Buy It

82 Nutrition
Information

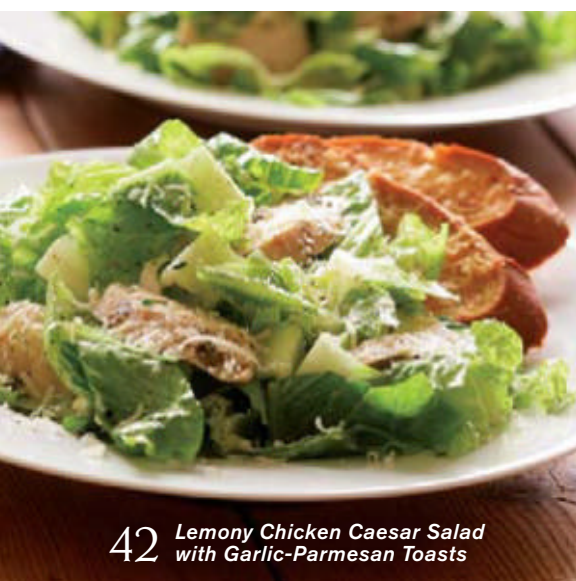
BACK COVER

Make It Tonight
Stir-fried cauliflower

74

71

- ◆ QUICK
Under 45 minutes
- ◆ MAKE AHEAD
Can be completely prepared ahead but may need reheating and a garnish to serve
- ◆ MOSTLY MAKE AHEAD
Can be partially prepared ahead but will need a few finishing touches before serving
- ◆ VEGETARIAN
May contain eggs and dairy ingredients



42 Lemony Chicken Caesar Salad with Garlic-Parmesan Toasts



67 Butter Pound Cake

recipes

Cover Recipe

- ◆ Linguine with Shrimp & Chorizo, 82a

Appetizers

- ◆ ◆ Smoky Eggplant & White Bean Dip with Pita Crisps, 82a

Salads

- ◆ Lemony Chicken Caesar Salad with Garlic-Parmesan Toasts, 42
- ◆ Steak, Egg & Blue Cheese Salad, 82a

Soups

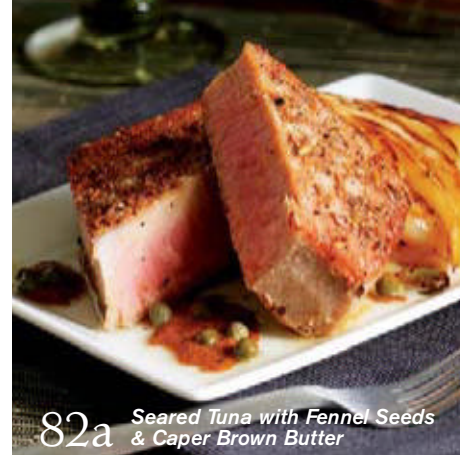
- ◆ ◆ Curried Lentil Soup, 82a
- Tuscan Peasant Soup with Rosemary & Pancetta, 10

Pasta & Rice

- ◆ Coconut Rice with Chicken & Snow Peas, 40
- ◆ Linguine with Shrimp & Chorizo, 82a

Meat, Poultry & Sausage

- ◆ Buttermilk Country Fried Chicken with Cucumber Salad, 82a
- ◆ Chinese Five-Spice-Crusted Duck Breasts, 82a
- ◆ Coconut Rice with Chicken & Snow Peas, 40
- ◆ Frittata with Kale, Onions & Chorizo, 62
- ◆ Frittata with Sausage, Mushrooms & Onions, 62
- ◆ Lamb Shank & Sweet Pepper Ragù, 61
- ◆ Lemony Chicken Caesar Salad with Garlic-Parmesan Toasts, 42
- ◆ Linguine with Shrimp & Chorizo, 82a
- ◆ Neapolitan Rib & Sausage Ragù, 59
- Roast Chicken with Rosemary-Lemon Salt, 39



82a Seared Tuna with Fennel Seeds & Caper Brown Butter

- ◆ Short Rib & Porcini Mushroom Ragù, 60
- ◆ Soft Chicken Tacos with the Works, 42
- ◆ Steak, Egg & Blue Cheese Salad, 82a

Seafood

- ◆ Linguine with Shrimp & Chorizo, 82a
- ◆ Seared Tuna with Fennel Seeds & Caper Brown Butter, 82a

Egg Main Dishes

- ◆ ◆ Frittata with Asparagus, Herbs & Scallions, 62
- ◆ Frittata with Kale, Onions & Chorizo, 62
- ◆ ◆ Frittata with Mushrooms, Leeks & Goat Cheese, 62
- ◆ Frittata with Potatoes, Onions & Pancetta, 62
- ◆ Frittata with Sausage, Mushrooms & Onions, 62
- ◆ Steak, Egg & Blue Cheese Salad, 82a

Side Dishes

- ◆ ◆ Browned Cauliflower with Anchovies, Olives & Capers, 21
- ◆ ◆ Cabbage & Carrot Stir-Fry with Toasted Cumin & Lime, 47
- ◆ Crispy Smashed Roasted Potatoes, 45
- ◆ ◆ Green Bean Stir-Fry with Shredded Coconut, 49
- ◆ ◆ Mushroom Stir-Fry with Onions & Tomatoes, 48
- ◆ ◆ Potato Stir-Fry with Mint & Cilantro, 49
- ◆ ◆ Stir-Fried Cauliflower with Green Peas & Ginger, back cover

Sauces

- ◆ Lamb Shank & Sweet Pepper Ragù, 61
- ◆ Neapolitan Rib & Sausage Ragù, 59
- ◆ Short Rib & Porcini Mushroom Ragù, 60

Spices & Vinaigrettes

- ◆ ◆ Garam Masala, 70
- ◆ ◆ Honey-Mustard Sherry Vinaigrette, 72

Cakes & Desserts

- ◆ ◆ Apple Brown-Butter Jalousie, 56
- ◆ ◆ Brandy & Rum Glazed Pound Cake, 68
- ◆ ◆ Butter Pound Cake, 67
- ◆ ◆ Chocolate Chip Pound Cake, 69
- ◆ ◆ Lemon-Coconut Pound Cake, 69
- ◆ ◆ Mixed-Berry Jalousie, 56

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Keep It Casual & Comforting

You've just come through a long season of feasts and celebrations, so after ringing in the New Year, why not slow down and take it a bit easy. We're not suggesting you give up entertaining entirely—after all, there's no better cure for the post-holiday blues than an invitation to dinner—but when you do have people over, keep things low-key. Instead of multi-course extravaganzas, opt for comforting family-style meals. A delicious dish or two is really

all you need to serve, but if you have the time and energy, go ahead and round out the meal with an easy appetizer, a simple salad, or a do-ahead dessert. To get you started, here are two entertaining menus with planning strategies to help you pull them together, plus four duos for weeknight dinners.

Before you cook, be sure to check the yield of every recipe, as you might need to double or triple a recipe if you're cooking for a crowd.

Almost-fancy roast chicken dinner

You can salt the chicken and make the lentil soup up to a day ahead (though when you reheat the soup you may need to adjust its consistency by adding a little water). About 90 minutes before your guests arrive, pop the chicken into the oven to roast, wash and dry your salad greens, and start prepping the ingredients for the potato side dish (don't cook it until about 20 minutes before serving time, though). While the roast chicken rests, put the nuts you'll be using for dessert in the hot oven to toast.

Curried Lentil Soup, p. 82a

Roast Chicken with Rosemary-Lemon Salt, p. 39

Potato Stir-Fry with Mint & Cilantro, p. 49

A simple green salad

Vanilla ice cream topped with toasted nuts and honey

To drink: A young, fruity Beaujolais or a crisp Sauvignon Blanc from France

A slow-cook Sunday supper

Make the jalousie early in the day and let it rest until supper-time. You can make the eggplant dip up to a day ahead and chill—just be sure to bring it to room temperature before serving and garnish at the last minute—but if you're spending a leisurely afternoon in the kitchen, you'll have ample time to prepare the dip while the ragù simmers in the oven.

Smoky Eggplant & White Bean Dip with Pita Crisps, p. 82a

Lamb Shank & Sweet Pepper Ragù, p. 61, with fresh pappardelle pasta

Apple Brown-Butter Jalousie with whipped cream, p. 56

To drink: A medium-bodied French Syrah or Grenache blend

4 weeknight duos

These pairings are perfect for family meals yet special enough for impromptu entertaining. If you want to finish a meal with something sweet, any of the pound cakes on pp. 66–69 would be a good choice; they can be made from 3 to 7 days in advance, so you can bake on the weekend and have cake on hand for weeknight desserts.

1 Seared Tuna with Fennel Seeds & Caper Brown Butter, p. 82a

Browned Cauliflower with Anchovies, Olives & Capers, p. 21

2 Tuscan Peasant Soup with Rosemary & Pancetta, p. 10

Arugula salad with toasted almonds and Honey-Mustard Sherry Vinaigrette, p. 72

3 Buttermilk Country Fried Chicken with Cucumber Salad, p. 82a

Crispy Smashed Potatoes, p. 45

4 Potato, Onion & Pancetta Frittata with Basil & Parmigiano, p. 62

Romaine lettuce with Caesar Salad Vinaigrette, p. 42

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from the editor

A promise to cook more,

Normal people make New Year's resolutions like "Lose 10 pounds," "No more sweets," "Never eat bread again." Here at *Fine*

Cooking, we make resolutions about food, too; they're just a little different.

"This year, I want to learn to make a perfect loaf of crusty artisan bread," one editor told me. "I want to master the art of Thai cooking," another said. And, "I want to entertain more," from a third.

But aside from these ambitious cooks, everyone else—I discovered after taking an informal poll—has a seemingly simple wish: to just plain cook more, especially on the weekends. Everyone wants to cook great stuff over the weekend so they can

have delicious (and quick) home-made meals throughout the week. Of course, the big bugaboo is finding the weekend time to do the cooking.

While we can't unplug your phone or run your errands for you, we can offer you an issue packed with make-ahead inspiration. Hopefully, inspiration equals motivation—if this January *Fine Cooking* doesn't get you in the kitchen, I don't know what will.

Here are a few great candidates for Sunday afternoon simmering (or baking or roasting):

❖ The delicious **meat ragù** on pp. 58–61. Divide these into small portions and freeze them to use for quick and hearty pasta dinners later.

❖ Any of the **butter pound cakes** on pp. 66–69. Well-wrapped, they keep for a few days, but they can be frozen, too.

❖ The recipe for **two roast chickens** on pp. 38–43. Eat one for Sunday supper and save the other to make tacos, salads, or stir-fries over the next few days.

Lots of other recipes—like the crispy potatoes on pp. 44–45, the frittatas on pp. 62–65, and my Tuscan soup, below—can be mostly or completely made ahead. So, no excuses, anyone (and this includes you, FC staffers, and me). Don't worry, though; if your weekends are just too busy right now for leisurely cooking, we've still got



Tuscan Peasant Soup with Rosemary & Pancetta

Yields 3½ qts.; serves six to eight.

5 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1¼ cups small-diced pancetta (about 6 oz. or 6 thick slices)
4 cups large-diced Savoy cabbage (about ½ small head)
2 cups medium-diced onion (10 to 12 oz. or 2 small)
1½ cups medium-diced carrot (about 4 medium carrots)
½ tsp. kosher salt; more as needed
2 Tbs. minced garlic
1 Tbs. plus 1 tsp. minced fresh rosemary
1 tsp. ground coriander
1 28-oz. can diced tomatoes, drained
7 cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth
2 15½-oz. cans small white beans, rinsed and drained (about 2½ cups, drained)
1 to 2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
Freshly ground black pepper
1 cup fresh breadcrumbs, toasted
1 cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

Heat 2 Tbs. of the olive oil in a 4- to 5-qt. Dutch oven over medium heat. When hot, add the pancetta and cook, stirring frequently, until quite shrunken, golden brown, and crisp (the oil will also be golden brown), about 6 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and with a slotted spoon or strainer carefully transfer the pancetta to a paper-towel-lined plate. Pour off and discard all but 2 Tbs. of the fat from the pan.

Return the pot to medium-high heat and add the chopped cabbage. Cook the cabbage, stirring occasionally, until limp and browned around the edges, about 3 minutes. Remove the pot from the heat again and transfer the cabbage to another plate.

Put the pot back over medium heat and add 2 Tbs. more of the olive oil. When the oil is hot, add the onions, carrots, and salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions are softened and the vegetables are browned around the edges and beginning to stick to the bottom of the pan, 8 to 9 minutes. Add the last 1 Tbs. of olive oil, the garlic, 1 Tbs. of the fresh rosemary, and the ground coriander and cook,

eat better

plenty of quick dishes in this issue that you can pull together after work (see the recipe index on p. 6). And like the pasta on the cover, they all have that boost of *Fine Cooking* flavor you've come to expect.

—Susie Middleton, editor

P.S. It's true, this regular issue of *Fine Cooking* is packed with make-ahead recipes. But if you really get into cooking (and entertaining) on the weekend, you'll want to be sure to check out our new 2007 *Weekend Cooking*. This special collection of *Fine Cooking* recipes is on sale at newsstands now and is also available to purchase through our Web site at www.FineCooking.com.

stirring, until the garlic is fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the tomatoes, stir together, and cook the mixture 2 to 3 more minutes.

Return the cabbage to the pan and add the chicken broth. Stir well, bring to a boil, and reduce to a simmer. Cook for 10 to 15 minutes to infuse the broth with the flavor of the vegetables. Add the beans, bring back to a simmer, and cook for a minute or two. Remove the pan from the heat, stir in the remaining 1 tsp. fresh rosemary, and let rest a few minutes.

Taste the soup and add lemon juice to brighten it—you'll want at least 1 tsp. Season with more salt if necessary and a few grinds of fresh pepper. Serve the soup hot, garnished with the reserved pancetta crisps, the toasted bread-crumbs, and the grated Parmigiano.



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from our readers

Two good reasons not to microwave dishes.

Heating dinner plates or other dishes in the microwave (a tip in *Fine Cooking* #81) is contraindicated if the dishes being heated have any metallic—gold or silver—trim. Even my Rosenthal Ascot pattern, with just a simple gold rim, caused arcing when I attempted to warm some soup in a bowl. Luckily, I was standing right by the microwave and was able to hit the Cancel button before harm was done to the bowl or the microwave.

—Charles Chapman,
London, Ontario

In *Fine Cooking* #81, a reader recommended using the microwave to heat dinner plates. If I'm not mistaken, the fact that an empty plate "heats" in the microwave is an indication that it is not microwave-safe. I learned that lesson the hard way when a stoneware plate exploded in my microwave.

—Sally Geyer, Richardson, Texas

Editors' reply: To help sort out the confusion over safe microwaving, we talked with Allison Eckelkamp, a public relations representative for GE appliances. She gave us some great guidelines:

"Microwave-safe" is a determination made by the cookware or utensil manufacturer. However, from the standpoint of an oven manufacturer like GE, "microwave-safe" means that the cookware will not heat up, or cause arcing, or soften, or melt, when used in accordance with the microwave manufacturer's instructions.

If you put a microwave-safe dish in the oven without food, it should not get any warmer than room temperature. That said, it's never a good idea to run the microwave empty or even with just a dish inside. For safe operation, there must be food in the oven to absorb the microwave energy. Running the microwave without food can damage the oven's components.

If you want to test the microwave safety of a dish, GE's "Use and Care" manual and Web site explain how to

go about it (see paragraph below). Once you've determined that your dish is microwave-safe, go ahead and use it in the microwave—with food on or in it.

If you are not sure if a dish is microwave-safe, use this test:

Place in the oven both the dish you are testing and a glass measuring cup filled with 1 cup of water—set the measuring cup either in or next to the dish. Microwave 30 to 45 seconds at high. If the dish heats, it should not be used for microwaving. If the dish remains cool and only the water in the cup heats, then the dish is microwave-safe.

Cooking smart

I am a subscriber to *Fine Cooking*, and I love it. I canceled all my other cooking magazines and use just this one. Your tips and ideas have helped me become a more spontaneous cook; I'm able to think of the lessons learned from the magazine and then create my own dishes using those principles.

One issue from a few years ago (*Fine Cooking* #51, June–July 2002) was so full of wonderful ideas and recipes that I use it almost every week. The grilled pork ("Foolproof Grilled Pork Tenderloin" by Pam Anderson) in that issue is my stand-by main course. Honestly, I fed it to every group I had over for dinner one summer (and I entertain once or twice a week) and just varied the sauce and glaze. The more times I grilled it, the better I got with it. I would stress to readers that to get the most out of a recipe you have to prepare it at least three times. Then you know its characteristics and feel in control of the situation.

—Ann Jones, Columbus, Ohio

Correction

Schott Zwiesel, maker of the Tritan Forté wine glasses mentioned on p. 27 of *Fine Cooking* #82, is a German company, not Austrian, as stated. It's located in Zwiesel, Bavaria, Germany (www.schott-zwiesel.com). ♦

C^{fine} Cooking

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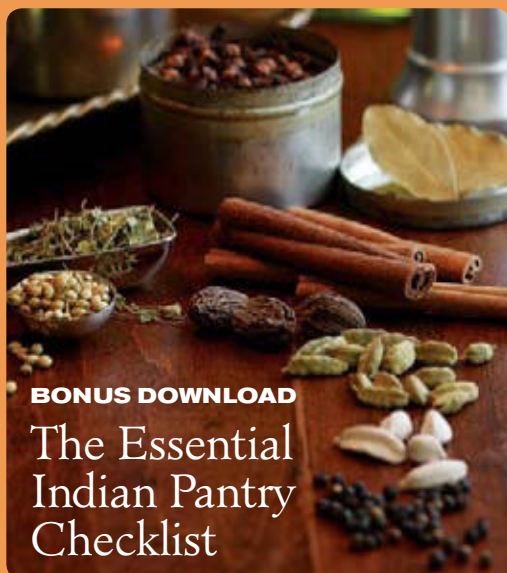
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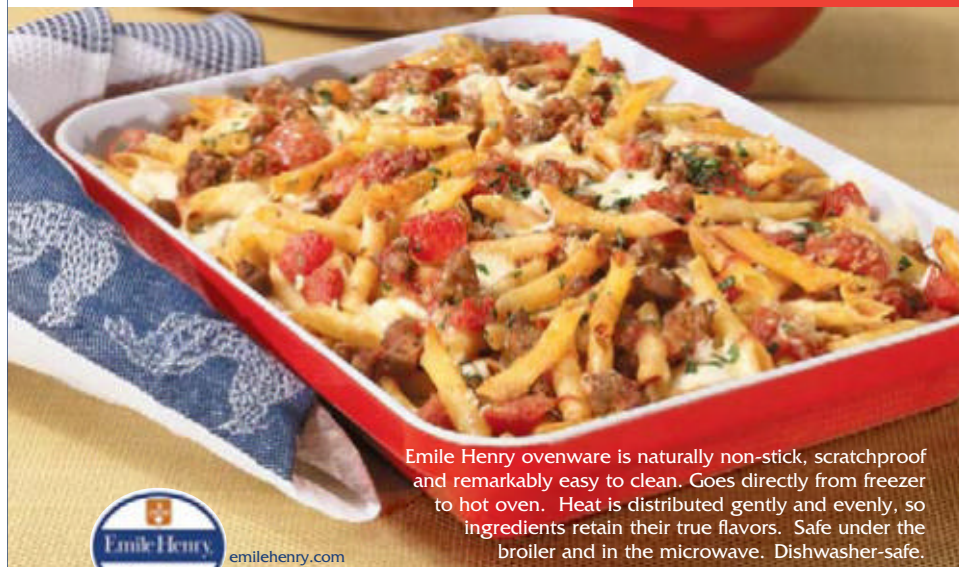
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Tony Rosenfeld ("Roast Chicken," p. 38) had plenty of opportunities to refine his chicken-roasting technique while writing his first cookbook, *150 Things to Make with Roast Chicken and 50 Ways to Roast It*, which will be published by Taunton Press this spring. (And he's not done with the subject yet—look for his story on crisp coatings for chicken breasts in our next issue.) Tony is a food writer and restaurant consultant who lives on Boston's North Shore.

Fine Cooking editor **Susie Middleton** ("Crispy Potatoes," p. 44) says, "When I worked at Al Forno restaurant in Providence, R.I., the smashed red potatoes were the most popular thing on the menu. And during my stint as a chef in a gourmet market, I made hundreds of pounds of classic potato salad. These days, while the crowds at my house are a little smaller, I find anything potatoey will please just about everyone."



Suvir Saran



Biba Caggiano



Dina Cheney

Born in New Delhi, **Suvir Saran** ("Indian Stir-Fries," p. 46) came to the United States in 1993 to study art. But it soon became apparent that what he really wanted to do was turn people on to the cooking of his native India. He opened a catering business, began to teach, wrote a book, *Indian Home Cooking*, and became executive chef at Dévi restaurant in New York City. Suvir's next book, *American Masala*, is due out in the fall, and he plans to open several more restaurants this year, all under the name American Masala.

Dina Cheney ("Tasting Party," p. 50) is a cooking teacher, tasting host, and freelance writer. While teaching classes and leading tasting events, she met countless students who wanted to develop their palates but didn't know where to begin. That's what inspired her to

write her book, *Tasting Club*, which walks readers through all the steps of hosting at-home tasting parties.

In her article, senior editor **Kimberly Masibay** ("A Sweet Treat," p. 55) shares her secrets for making an apple jalousie. Kim trained as a pastry chef in Germany, studied journalism at Columbia University, and worked as a newspaper reporter and magazine editor in New York City before joining *Fine Cooking*.

Biba Caggiano ("The Best Ragù," p. 58) was born and raised in Emilia-Romagna, the land of prosciutto, Parmigiano, lasagne, and, of course, ragù. "I've been making ragù for as long as I can remember," says Biba. She is the chef and owner of Biba Restaurant in Sacramento, California, host of the syndicated show *Biba's Italian Kitchen*, and author of eight cookbooks. Her latest is *Biba's Italy*.

As a busy cooking instructor, **Joyce Goldstein** ("Frittata," p. 62) is on the road a lot. When she gets home from a trip and needs a fast and tasty supper, she often reaches for eggs, cheese, and some leftover vegetables or a slice of bacon and whips up a frittata. Also a chef and cookbook author, Joyce is one of the foremost experts on Italian cooking in this country. Her many cookbooks include *Italian Slow and Savory*, *Enoteca*, and her latest, *Antipasti*.

Nicole Rees ("Pound Cakes," p. 66) has been developing cake recipes since the age of nine. She co-wrote the revised edition of *Understanding Baking*, a book on the science and technique of baking, as well as its companion recipe book, *The Baker's Manual*. A food scientist and frequent contributor to *Fine Cooking*, Nicole lives in Portland, Oregon. ♦



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American Originals

Four uniquely American cheeses and a beautiful board to show them off

BY LAURA GIANNATEMPO

1. An earthy, nutty blue

Bayley Hazen Blue is a lovely cow's milk blue cheese from Vermont's Jasper Hill Farm. We like its firm, crumbly texture, which turns slightly creamier in the mouth. It delivers the pungent sharpness you'd expect from a blue, balanced by a subtle floral note and hints of nuts. *Jasper Hill Farm Bayley Hazen Blue*, \$18.99 a pound at MurraysCheese.com. For information, visit JasperHillFarm.com.

2. Perfect for nibbling or cooking

Faarko, a creation of Cedar Grove Cheese in Wisconsin, is a mild semisoft mixed milk cheese (*får* is Danish for sheep and *ko* means cow) that gets richer with every bite, developing a nice complex flavor. This is a great cheese for snacking or cooking. (Grilled cheese sandwich, anyone?) *Faarko*, \$10.99 a pound. To order, visit CedarGroveCheese.com or call 800-200-6020.

3. Parmigiano meets farmhouse Cheddar

Carr Valley's Gran Canaria is a delightful hard cheese made from cow, sheep, and goat milk, with a rind that is periodically rubbed with olive oil. Aged a minimum of two years, this cheese is intensely sharp, like Parmigiano, yet buttery and a little sweet, too, with hints of honey and fruit. *Carr Valley Gran Canaria*, \$16 a pound at CarrValleyCheese.com.

4. A tangy heart with a soft, buttery rind

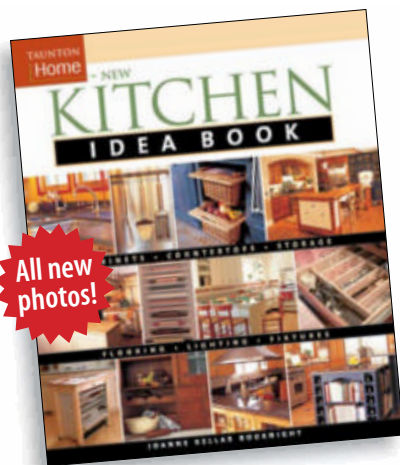
Another great one from Jasper Hill Farm, Constant Bliss is a buttery, bloomy-rind raw cow's milk cheese with a dense, tangy heart that becomes soft and nutty closer to the rind. It has an intense flavor that continues to develop in the mouth, leaving you with a pleasantly pungent back-of-the-throat kick. *Jasper Hill Farm Constant Bliss*, \$8.99 each (about a quarter pound) at MurraysCheese.com. ♦

5. No ordinary cheese board

This natural olivewood board is a striking surface for setting out these special cheeses. Handcrafted in Italy, each board has a different shape and its own personality. *Olivewood cheese board*, \$60 at ArtisanalCheese.com.

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FOR THE LOVE OF GOOD FOOD

Cauliflower

Discover the hidden talents of this winter gem

BY RUTH LIVELY



When I was a child, we ate cauliflower only one way: boiled and coated with cheese sauce. I can't say I was crazy about it. The cauliflower was cooked too long, at least by today's standards, and back then I didn't like cheese very much. It was only years later, when I experienced perfectly cooked cauliflower topped by a delicate, citrusy hollandaise-type sauce, that I discovered its wonderfully sweet nuttiness and came to love this winter vegetable. Now, I serve it often—roasted or sautéed, as a side dish for hearty braises and roasts; puréed in soups; or even as an appetizer, along with a brightly flavored sauce or dip.

The secret to getting the most flavor from cauliflower is to not overcook

it. It should be just tender—when a metal skewer inserted in the stem meets the faintest resistance, it's done. I prefer high-heat cooking methods like roasting or pan-searing (see the recipe opposite), because they brown the cauliflower and add a lovely caramelized sweetness. But cauliflower is also delicious steamed or boiled.

Besides the familiar combo with anchovies, cauliflower is great with other strong partners like olives, capers, soy sauce, and curry, as well as with rich pork products like bacon and prosciutto. At the other end of the spectrum, cauliflower plays nicely with cream, butter, eggs, and nuts. Potatoes and beans blend well with it, too, softening its flavor a bit.

How to cut cauliflower for any dish

Always start by trimming away the leaves and the base of the stem.



Whole florets

Simply cut the florets away from the central stem with a knife. Pay close attention during cooking and remove smaller ones as they're cooked through. Whole florets are great steamed, boiled, or roasted.

QUICK IDEA:

Lightly steam florets and serve them with a dip or sauce, such as a pungent anchoiade or bagna cauda (both anchovy-based), a garlic-basil mayonnaise, or a citrus-spiked soy dipping sauce.



Halved or quartered florets

Smaller cut-up florets are wonderful sautéed or roasted. Try to cut them into relatively even sizes so they cook at the same rate. (See the recipe opposite for more cutting details.)

QUICK IDEA:

Toss halved or quartered florets with olive oil, salt, and paprika, and roast at 375°F until tender and browned around the edges. Halfway through the cooking, add grated lemon zest and chopped fresh oregano. Squeeze on some lemon juice, toss, and serve warm.



Slices

For something a little different, cut whole florets lengthwise into thin, elegant slices that are perfect for deep frying or baking in gratins. You can also blanch them lightly and add them to salads for crunch.

QUICK IDEA:

Dip ¼-inch-thick slices in beaten egg, coat with breadcrumbs, and fry in 365°F peanut oil until golden outside and crisp-tender inside. Season with salt and serve with lemon wedges or a bowl of spicy marinara sauce.

Whip up a soup, a pasta, or a purée

Make a velvety soup with curry and yogurt.

Sweat chopped celery and onion in olive oil. Stir in minced garlic and a little curry powder. Add vegetable broth, chopped tomato, and chopped cauliflower florets. Simmer, covered, until the vegetables are tender, and then purée in a blender. Season with salt and stir in plain yogurt.

Use leftover cauliflower for a delicious pasta sauce.

Cook minced garlic and crushed red pepper flakes in olive oil until fragrant. Add anchovy filets and mash to a paste with a wooden spoon. Add chopped cooked cauliflower, season with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring, until the cauliflower is hot. Stir in a ladleful of pasta cooking water and serve over a short, stubby pasta, such as penne.

Serve puréed cauliflower instead of mashed potatoes.

Boil or steam cauliflower and then purée it in a blender or food processor. Add cream or butter and season with salt, pepper, and nutmeg.

A head of a different color

We're all familiar with white cauliflower, but nowadays you can also find a beautiful deep-golden variety and a stunning purple one. Then there's the exotic and weirdly gorgeous lime-green Romanesco, with conical, spiral florets that look like seashells. Despite their different appearances, all types of cauliflower have a similar sweet, assertive flavor that pairs well with both rich, pungent ingredients and more delicate ones.



Browned Cauliflower with Anchovies, Olives & Capers

Serves four.

Anchovies and cauliflower are a sublime pairing. If you think six filets are too much, trust me: You'll get a delicious suggestion of anchovy, not an overpowering punch. This is one of those dishes that improves greatly if allowed to sit for several hours before eating. Serve at room temperature or warm it gently on the stove or in the oven.

1 medium-small head cauliflower (about 2 lb.)

1 large clove garlic, peeled

Pinch coarse sea salt or kosher salt

6 oil-packed anchovy filets, drained

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

15 black olives (such as Kalamata or niçoise), pitted and roughly chopped

1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice; more to taste

2 tsp. capers, roughly chopped

1 tsp. finely grated lemon zest

Large pinch of crushed red pepper flakes or ⅛ tsp. Aleppo pepper

Trim the leaves and stem from the cauliflower head. Working from the bottom of the head, cut off individual florets until you reach the crown, where the florets are small and fused together. Cut the large florets into quarters, the medium ones into halves, and the crown into four pieces, always trying to keep the top of the florets attached to pieces of stem.

In a mortar, crush the garlic and the salt with a pestle until you obtain a paste. Add the anchovies and pound them to a paste as well. (If you don't have a mortar, you can mince the garlic, salt, and anchovies very finely and then mash them with the flat side of the knife until they become a paste.) Scrape this mixture into a large shallow bowl. Add 1 Tbs. of the oil, the olives, lemon juice, capers, lemon zest, and red pepper flakes. Stir well.

Heat 2 Tbs. of the olive oil in a heavy 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat. When the oil is hot, add half the cauliflower pieces in a single layer, flat side down. Cook the cauliflower until well browned on the bottom, 2 to 4 minutes, and then transfer to a plate. Add the remaining 1 Tbs. oil to the pan and repeat with the remaining cauliflower, but don't transfer it to the plate. Return the first batch of cauliflower to the pan, turn the heat down to low and carefully add ⅔ cup water. Cover and let steam until the stems are just tender, 6 to 8 minutes.

With a slotted spoon, transfer the cooked cauliflower to the bowl with the anchovy mixture. Add 1 Tbs. of the cooking liquid. Let sit 1 minute to warm and loosen the mixture, and then turn gently to coat the cauliflower and evenly distribute the olives and capers. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Ruth Lively cooks, writes, and gardens in New Haven, Connecticut. ♦

I love the glossy sheen that a chocolate ganache glaze gives to cakes. But how can you retain the shine after refrigeration?

—Danya Goerig, via email

Alice Medrich responds: Ganache is a mixture of cream and chocolate, which, when poured warm over cakes, makes the ultimate rich chocolate glaze. Ganache naturally loses its shiny appearance as it cools and sets, and even more so when refrigerated, but there are several simple tricks you can use to preserve its attractive sheen.

If your cake requires refrigeration, be sure that it's refrigerator-cold (not frozen) *before* you glaze it, and return it immediately to the refrigerator (not the freezer) to set. Do this even if you plan to remove the cake from the fridge before serving to soften the texture. For the best sheen, let the ganache cool to a tepid temperature—90° to 100°F—and stir it before pouring it on the cake. If the ganache is too thick to pour at this temperature, thin it with warm cream. Once the ganache is poured over the cake, use as few spatula strokes as possible to spread the glaze; too much spatula work will dull the ganache as well.

Three more tricks for greater gloss:

- ❖ For 1 to 1½ cups ganache, add 2 to 3 teaspoons corn syrup to the glaze.
- ❖ Remove the dessert from the fridge 30 to 60 minutes before serving to bring back some of the sheen.
- ❖ And as a desperate measure, you can temporarily make a dull glaze shiny again with the help of a hair dryer set on low heat. Very carefully, starting from a conservative distance of at least 3 feet, aim the warm air at the glaze, moving the dryer constantly to avoid melting the glaze in a single spot, and moving closer to the cake as necessary. Stop when the cake looks shiny and don't overdo it. Serve the dessert shortly thereafter, since there's no telling how the ganache will look later, when it hardens again.

One last note: If the dessert doesn't require refrigeration, don't chill it. Glaze it and let it sit at room temperature. This will give you the best-looking ganache of all.

Alice Medrich, a chocolate expert, has written several books on the subject, including the award-winning cookbook, Bittersweet: Recipes and Tales from a Life in Chocolate.

Why does a green ring sometimes form around the yolk of a hard-cooked egg?

—Doris Gochal, via email

AElisa Maloberti responds: The gray-green discoloration you sometimes see on the surface of a hard-cooked yolk is caused by a reaction between the sulfur and the iron in the egg, but it affects neither the egg's flavor nor its nutritional content.

This chemical reaction is usually brought on by overcooking, but it can also be caused by water that's high in iron (hard water, for example). If your problem is hard water, try cooking your eggs in bottled water. But if it's not the water, then the solution is to avoid overcooking the eggs. (Editors' note: To find out how to boil an egg perfectly, see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 71.)

Elisa Maloberti is the consumer information coordinator for the American Egg Board.

When I make vinaigrette, it sometimes breaks very easily. Why does this happen and can it be fixed?

—Caroline DeGrazia, Santa Cruz, California

AMolly Stevens responds: A vinaigrette is an emulsion, which is the technical term for a combination of two incompatible liquids, such as oil and vinegar. In the kitchen, there are two types of emulsions—stable and temporary. Stable emulsions, like mayonnaise, contain a binder (egg yolks in the case of mayon-

Have a question of general interest about cooking? Send it to Q&A, Fine Cooking, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by email to fcqa@taunton.com, and we'll find a cooking professional with the answer.

naise) that combines the incompatible liquids and helps them stay blended.

A simple vinaigrette, on the other hand, is a temporary emulsion, so the two liquids (oil and vinegar) remain combined for only a brief time after whisking or shaking. Without a binder present, the dressing will always break, or separate, as it sits.

You can remedy this by vigorously whisking or shaking the vinaigrette (in a lidded jar) at the last minute before dressing your salad. Or you can stabilize the vinaigrette by adding a binder (for example, mustard, mayonnaise, cream, sour cream, or even a little vegetable or herb purée), thus transforming a temporary emulsion into a more stable one. This approach, however, overlooks one of the great qualities of a simple vinaigrette: Its lightness perfectly dresses fresh salad greens without weighing them down.

Molly Stevens is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking.

I'm pregnant and am concerned about the listeria risk in cheese. I've been told that if it's pasteurized, it's safe. But I've also heard that listeria could develop after pasteurization. Is this true?

—Alexandra Cerf, via email

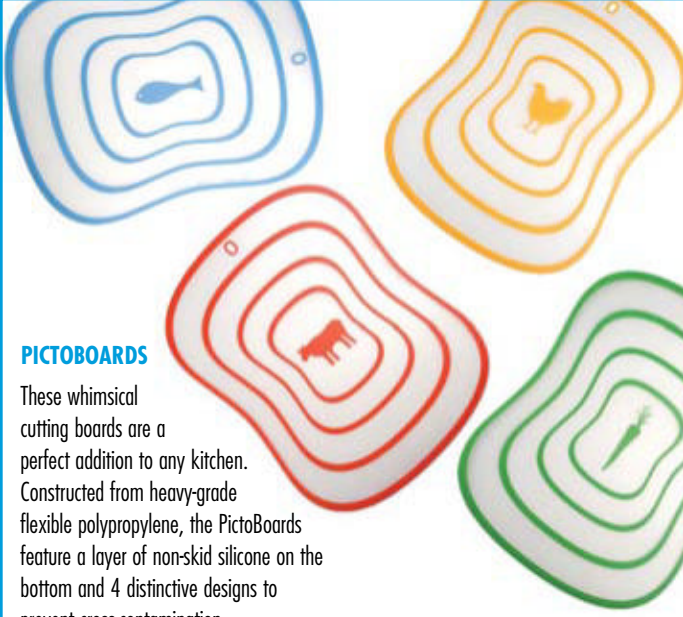
A Catherine Donnelly responds: It's true that listeria can develop after pasteurization but

only in certain cheeses. Listeria is an environmental pathogen, which means that it can be found in the environment in which a cheese is produced and pasteurized; therefore, the bacteria could potentially contaminate a cheese after it's been pasteurized but before it's been packaged. The good news for pregnant women is that most pasteurized, aged semihard or hard cheeses—for example, hard Swiss, Parmigiano-Reggiano, and Cheddars—simply do not support the growth of listeria, making them safe to consume.

But some other types of cheese can allow listeria to grow if they're contaminated after pasteurization. These include bloomy-rind cheeses like Brie and Camembert, feta, blue cheeses, and soft cheeses like ricotta, queso fresco, fresh goat cheese, and even cottage cheese. In a well-maintained production facility, the risk of contamination is very low, but because listeriosis can be devastating for a fetus, it's probably best for pregnant women to avoid these soft and fresh cheeses, even if they've been pasteurized. And of course, they should also avoid any unpasteurized cheeses.

There is one way for pregnant women to safely eat any cheese, regardless of type or pasteurization: Just cook it. By heating any cheese to 160°F or higher for at least two minutes, listeria will be killed.

Catherine Donnelly is the co-director of the Vermont Institute for Artisan Cheese and professor of nutrition and food science at the University of Vermont. ♦



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She carefully pours the hot caramel into a tray and lets it harden for 24 hours.

Handmade sea-salt caramels

BY LAURA GIANNATEMPO

Christine Moore first sunk her teeth into a Brittany sea salt caramel when she was training as a pastry chef in France in the early '90s. She was smitten by its delicacy—by the faint trace of salt that emerged from its chewy sweetness.

When, in 1999, she quit her pastry job in Los Angeles to take care of her first daughter, she found those caramels haunting her. Could she recreate them at home? After experimenting with 10 types of sea salt and a dozen recipes, she finally came up with a satisfyingly chewy caramel that struck just the right balance between salty and sweet.

She began selling these caramels to local stores, working out of her home. As word of her delicious candies spread and business

grew, she rented a small professional kitchen in Hollywood and started the Little Flower Candy Company.

With the help of her staff of two, Christine makes and wraps her caramels by hand, packages them in small plastic bags bearing labels she designed herself, and personally delivers them to 40-odd stores around L.A. (She also sells them online.) “Business is brisk,” she says. “We can barely keep up with demand.” Although her offerings now include vanilla and lemon caramels as well as homemade marshmallows, it’s her sea-salt caramels that sell the best. She’s planning to open a store in Los Angeles but has no intention of changing her approach. “I’ll keep making caramels by hand,” she says.

To order, visit LittleFlowerCandyco.com or call 323-551-5948. ♦




The hardened caramel is transferred to a work surface, where Christine cuts it into little squares that are then ready to be wrapped.



Christine is particular about her wrapping technique so that the waxed paper doesn't tear.

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Breaking Out of Your Wine Rut

The wines you love can lead you to a whole world of exciting new varietals

BY TIM GAISER

When you find a wine variety you like, it's all too easy to fall into a comfortable rut, opening bottles of Chardonnay, say, or Pinot Noir over and over again. But the fact is, it's almost just as easy to break out of your rut—because your favorite wines can help you discover new varietals that you'll like as much if not more than ones you usually drink. Here's a rundown of six popular wine varietals and some delicious alternatives to them.



If you like Chardonnay, you may love Viognier

Chardonnay is still the most popular white wine and for good reason: The combination of ripe apple/pear fruit with notes of butter, spice, and oak make Chardonnay a pleasant sipping wine that's also tasty with a range of foods, from hearty grilled chicken and fish to lighter pasta dishes. Viognier (vee-oh-NYAY), a grape that originated in France's northern Rhône Valley, delivers exotic floral aromas and delicious peachy fruit flavors that are often highlighted by a touch of spicy oak, much like Chardonnay. The wine

is a good accompaniment to any food with which you drink Chardonnay. Look for Viognier from California and Australia.

Bottles to try

2004 d'Arenberg
The Hermit Crab
Marsanne Viognier,
McLaren Vale,
Australia, \$15

2005 Cold Heaven
Viognier, Santa Rita
Hills, California, \$19

If you like Cabernet Sauvignon, you may love Malbec

Cabernet, the king of red wines, is beloved for its concentrated black cherry/currant fruit with notes of green olives and herbs and its firm, slightly bitter tannins. Like Cabernet, Malbec grapes originated in Bordeaux, France, but these days, the best Malbec wines hail from Argentina, where the mild climate, long growing season, and high altitude yield wines with ripe fruit, soft tannins, and high natural acidity. If you're a fan of California Cab, you'll be delighted to learn that Argentine Malbec is often aged in American oak barrels and

offers the same spicy flavors and texture at a fraction of the price. And like Cabernet, Malbec is a perfect mate for red meat, especially beef and lamb.

Bottles to try

2004 Ñandú Malbec,
Mendoza, Argentina,
\$12

2005 Alamos Selección
Malbec, Argentina,
\$17

If you like Merlot, you may love Tempranillo

Merlot is the comfort food of red wines; its lush, plummy fruit flavor, herbal notes, and soft, velvety texture pair well with foods like burgers and meatloaf, barbecued chicken, even macaroni and cheese. Tempranillo is an important Spanish grape varietal and the primary grape in wines from Spain's Rioja region. Wines from this region are often referred to as "Riojas," and they're known for their ripe cherry/plum fruit, herbal notes, and soft, dusty tannins. And best of all, they're just as easy as Merlot to pair with food.

Bottles to try

2003 Campo Viejo
Rioja, Spain, \$12

2000 La Rioja Alta
Alberdi, Spain, \$19

If you like Sauvignon Blanc, you may love Albariño

Sauvignon Blanc's vibrant citrus fruits, herbal notes, and mouth-watering acidity make it one of the most versatile and food-friendly white wines to be found. Like Sauvignon Blanc, Albariño from the Rias Baixas region of northwestern Spain is all about vibrant grapefruit/lime fruit, with green herb notes and tart acidity. You'll find these wines to be just as food friendly as your favorite Sauvignon Blanc.

Bottles to try

2005 Vionta Albariño,
Rias Baixas, Spain,
\$12

2005 Valminor Albariño,
Rias Baixas, Spain,
\$14

If you like Red Zinfandel, you may love Shiraz

California Zinfandel and Australian Shiraz are like twins separated by an ocean. With its unbridled ripe, jammy fruits and pepper/spice notes, Zinfandel (red, not white) is the ultimate barbecue wine. You'll find a very similar combination of flavors and textures in Australian Shiraz but with added brightness and nuances of flowers and green fruits. Like Zin, Aussie Shiraz is deliciously fruity and easy to drink.

Bottles to try

2004 Penfolds Thomas
Hyland, Australia,
\$13

2003 Peter Lehmann
Shiraz, Barossa,
Australia, \$18

If you like Pinot Noir, you may love Cabernet Franc

With its bright red fruits, spice notes, and soft tannins, Pinot Noir pairs easily with either grilled fish or meats and is also a delight on its own. If you're a big fan of Pinot Noir, chances are you'll enjoy Cabernet Franc wines from France's Loire Valley, especially those from the village of Chinon. (Wines labeled Chinon are generally made with the Cabernet Franc grape; your wine merchant can help you confirm this.) These wines offer the bright red fruits and soft tannins that you love in Pinot but with an added herbal element.

Bottles to try

2004 Pierre Ferrand
Château de Ligré,
Chinon, France, \$14

2003 Domaine de la
Noblaie Les Chiens-
Chiens, Chinon,
France, \$16

Fine Cooking contributing editor Tim Gaiser is a master sommelier and wine educator who's always on the lookout for a new favorite wine. ♦



what's new

does it work?

A handy peeler

We're pretty particular about our peelers around here, and when we find one we like, we tend to stick with it. But this little peeler was so unusual—it's a mere 2 inches square, contoured to nestle in the palm of the hand—that we just had to give it a whirl.

Does it work? Absolutely, though it's not perfect for every peeling task. The stainless-steel blade is good and sharp, the peeler is very comfortable, and we

loved using it to peel long vegetables like carrots, cucumbers, and asparagus. But because the blade is tucked into your palm, you can't really see what you're doing, which is awkward when you're trying to peel something small, round, and slippery like an apple or a potato. For those, a traditional peeler with a handle seems to provide better control.

The Chef'n Palm Peeler sells for \$6.95 at ChefsResource.com.

update

The next generation of silicone kitchenware

In recent years, loads of silicone kitchenware has flooded the marketplace, and already, some manufacturers have begun to tweak their product lines, correcting flaws found in the first generation of silicone tools. Here are two updates we really like:

Better brushes

In the clean-up department, silicone basting and pastry brushes have an edge over natural-bristle brushes, which tend to get gunky and stay that way. But silicone bristles don't sop up liquid quite as well as natural bristles do. This new brush from Oxo, however, delivers the best of both worlds. It holds liquid, thanks to its uniquely absorbent center bristles, and it's easy to wash clean.

The pastry brush (shown) sells for \$6.99, and the basting brush for \$8.99 at Oxo.com.



A sturdier silicone Bundt pan

When I first put silicone Bundt pans to the test (see *Fine Cooking* #74, p. 21), I liked their lightness, flexibility, and nonstick qualities, but I was disappointed that the pans' sides bulged when filled with heavy cake batter, resulting in lopsided cakes. Still, I felt that a

silicone Bundt pan could potentially be a great thing—removing cakes from deeply fluted metal pans can be tricky—if only someone would design one that didn't lose its shape.

And now, someone has. The new Bundt pan, left, from Silicone Zone's New Wave line, is plenty supple, but the wave around the pan's

lip lends quite a bit of stability. When I poured rich, heavy pound cake batter into the pan, it held its shape, and the resulting cake released cleanly and wasn't at all lopsided.

Silicone Zone's 10-cup New Wave Bundt pan sells for \$22.99 at LaprimaShops.com.



Palm peeler	28
Silicone updates	28
Crêpe pans	29
Convertible refrigerator	29
Review: rice cookers	30

BY KIMBERLY Y. MASIBAY

A four-door convertible for the kitchen

Samsung's racy new refrigerator is truly convertible, letting you turn fridge space into freezer space, should the need arise. The 36-inch-wide refrigerator has four separate zones, each with independent, adjustable temperature controls. The top left compartment is a traditional freezer with an ice maker, and the top right is a nice, roomy refrigerator. What roles the two lower drawers play, however, are entirely up to you: You can set one at 50°F and use it to chill your Sauvignon Blanc and the other at -14°F to freeze food super fast, or choose any temperature in between. The convertible four-door refrigerator comes in black and stainless steel; prices start at about \$2,799. For more information visit Samsung.com.



tool vs. tool

Crêpe Pans

Crêpes are a delicious alternative to Sunday morning pancakes, and when you have the right tool, they're really not very difficult to make at home. But what is the right tool for the job? To find out, I put two options to the test: World Cuisine's 7-inch carbon-steel pan (below left) and Villaware's 7-inch electric crêpe maker.

In the end, both performed well, but the experience of using them is very different, and so are the results.



Traditional carbon-steel crêpe pan

Making crêpes in this pan involves pouring batter into the hot pan, swirling the pan to spread the batter into a thin layer, and cooking the crêpe briefly on both sides.

This pan needs to be seasoned before the first use—which takes just a few minutes—but once seasoned, the surface releases crêpes like a charm. The key to turning out perfect crêpes lies in mastering your timing and technique. When you pour batter into the hot pan, it sets in a matter of seconds, so you've got to swirl the batter very quickly into a nice thin circle or you'll end up with an oddly shaped crêpe.

Once you get the rhythm of pouring and swirling, though, the process feels natural and fun. Crêpes made in this pan turn out tender yet nicely browned on both sides; if you use about 1½ ounces of batter, the crêpes will be about 2.5 mm thick.

Pros: Crêpes are attractively browned on both sides and tender; mastering the technique is rewarding; pan is slim and easy to store.

Cons: If the pan isn't well seasoned, the crêpes will stick; swirling the batter into perfectly round crêpes takes some practice.

Pictured above: A 7-inch carbon-steel crêpe pan costs \$10.99 at Fantes.com.



Electric crêpe maker

The learning curve with this crêpe maker is short. To use it, you simply dip the hot nonstick plate into the batter, flip the pan upright, and let the crêpe cook on one side for a few moments. (The instructions say that the crêpes don't need to be cooked on both sides, which is fine if you plan to roll them around a tasty filling, but if you're serving them flat, I think it would be nicer to brown both sides.)

It might take a few tries before you can dip the pan into the batter just so: too deep and the batter curls over the edges of the pan; too shallow and the crêpe will be small or elliptical. But once you get a feel for it, using this machine is very easy. I was making perfectly round crêpes in no time. Because such a thin layer of batter sticks to the hot plate when you dip it, the crêpes are exceptionally thin (just 1 mm thick) and crisp around the edges, which is different from what I'm used to but not unpleasant.

Pros: Short learning curve; lets you make perfectly round, impressively thin crêpes with very little effort.

Cons: The crêpes' crisp edges may not be to everyone's taste; somewhat awkward to store.

Pictured above: Villaware's 7-inch crêpe maker costs \$29.95 at SurLaTable.com.

review

High-Tech Rice Cookers

BY MARYELLEN DRISCOLL

I've always followed standard stovetop procedure with rice: simmer gently, never peek, never stir. And the results have been perfectly fine. But when I made rice in some of the top fuzzy-logic rice cookers on the market, I realized that my stovetop method was no match.

And what is a fuzzy-logic rice cooker? Basically, it's an intelligent version of a no-frills rice cooker. Instead of just an on/off button, a fuzzy-logic rice cooker has a micro-computer that lets the machine regulate time and temperature according to the type of rice being cooked (brown rice, for example, cooks at a lower temperature than white rice). It can cook more kinds of rice than you've ever heard of—including sweet and germinated brown—and some models can even cook oatmeal or polenta, steam vegetables, and make stew. But what really sold us on the cookers was how well they handle the white and brown rice we use every day.

Such sophistication comes at a price, though. Even our Best Buy costs more than \$100. And these cookers will also cost you time: Expect to wait 45 to 50 minutes for white rice to cook, more for brown.

Test results

All but one of the cookers we tried made excellent white rice. But in tasks beyond cooking white rice, the models showed their true colors. Our favorites (shown here) had special settings and guidelines for cooking finicky brown rice and did a better job than cookers without those special settings.



Best buy

Sanyo Micro-Computerized Rice Cooker & Steamer

model ECJ-F50S

\$114.95 at Cooking.com

This 5-cup cooker has all the features almost anyone would need. Its only quirk: Brown rice must be washed and left to soak for an hour before cooking, or it will come out undercooked. If you can remember this step, though, you'll be rewarded with perfect brown rice.

Settings & features: quick cook, mixed, porridge, keep warm; settings to cook stew and dol sot bi bim bab (a classic Korean rice dish in which the bottom layer of rice gets toasted and crisp); steamer insert and removable inner lid for easy cleaning.

Best all-around

Zojirushi Neuro Fuzzy Rice Cooker & Steamer

model NS-ZCC10-WZ

\$179.99 at EverythingKitchens.com

This 5½-cup cooker is as versatile as it is precise. A chime or tune (your choice) tells you when the cooking cycle is complete, which is especially handy with brown rice because it degrades in flavor and texture if held in the keep-warm setting. It also has a memory setting, which lets the cooker remember how you like a certain type of rice.

Settings & features: quick cook, mixed, porridge, keep warm, extended keep warm, reheat, timer-controlled cooking; removable inner lid for easy cleaning.



The other rice cookers in our tests were the Aroma Sensor-Logic rice cooker, model ARC-896, and the Elite Pro Fuzzy Logic rice cooker, model B601T.



A whiz with white rice

Tiger Electric Rice Cooker
model JAG-B10U
\$119.99 at Costco.com
(5% more for nonmembers)

This 5½-cup cooker lets you customize white rice's consistency, gives you the option to "scorch" it, meaning it can toast the bottom layer in the pot for a subtle nutty flavor and lightly crisped texture, and beeps when the cooking cycle is complete. Brown rice cooked unevenly in our tests: fluffy toward the top of the pot, pasty towards the bottom. Also, it's inconvenient that the inner lid isn't removable for in-sink cleaning.

Settings & features: quick cook, mixed, porridge, keep warm, reheat, scorch, timer-controlled cooking.

tip: Don't throw away your cooker's cup

The plastic measuring cup that comes with your cooker isn't a standard 1-cup measure. It holds about 180 ml versus 240 ml for a standard U.S. cup. To ensure that your rice cooks properly, measure the rice with the cooker's plastic cup and then pour in water until it reaches the appropriate etched line inside the cooking bowl.



There's no need to memorize water-to-rice ratios with these cookers. Lines etched on the inside of the cookpot tell you exactly how much water to add for the rice you're cooking.

How we tested

We tested five manufacturers' top-of-the-line fuzzy-logic rice cookers with capacities between 5 and 6 cups uncooked rice. With each cooker, we cooked long-grain white rice at the cooker's maximum capacity and also with just 1 cup uncooked rice; we made brown rice with 3 cups uncooked rice; we tested the quick-cook cycle of those cookers that offered it, using 2 cups uncooked long-grain white rice; and, if cookers offered a harder or softer cooking mode or a cooking cycle for sushi or sweet rice, we tested it.

In each test, we evaluated the entire pot of rice for evenness in consistency and texture.

Menu settings, defined

Fuzzy-logic rice cookers have lots of menu settings and features. Here are definitions of some that you'll see.

Quick cook: cooks white rice 10 to 15 minutes quicker than the normal cycle but with some sacrifice in quality.

Mixed: for instances when you're cooking rice with ingredients other than just water, such as spices or broth.

Porridge: developed for rice porridge, an Asian staple, but also works for oatmeal, polenta, rice pudding, and the like.

Keep warm: use to keep rice warm for up to 12 hours after the cooking cycle; most manufacturers recommend using this only with white rice.

Reheat: for rice that's been sitting in the keep-warm cycle, this feature makes it hot for eating in 5 to 10 minutes; can't be used to reheat cold rice.

Timer controlled: lets you program the cooker in advance to cook rice at a set time.

Maryellen Driscoll is Fine Cooking's editor at large. ♦

The Rules of Melting Cheese

BY ROBERT L. WOLKE

Melted cheese has given us many beloved dishes. From Italy, Switzerland, Mexico, and Great Britain we have inherited our lasagnes, fondues, quesadillas, and Welsh rabbits. America is nothing if not a melting pot—of cheeses, as well as ethnicities. But melted cheese has also given cooks many headaches. Sometimes it just doesn't melt the way you want it to. You'd like it to be smooth and saucy, and instead it turns stringy, or it separates, or maybe it won't melt at all.

Getting your desired results isn't always easy because cheese doesn't melt in quite the same way that simpler substances do (for an explanation, see the sidebar "What happens when cheese melts?" on p. 34). But by following three simple rules you can increase your odds of success.

Rule No.1

Use the cheese the recipe calls for, if you can.

This might sound obvious, but I mention it because I know how tempting it is to substitute a little bit of this for a little bit of that when you're cooking. With cheese, that's not always a good idea.

There are well over a thousand distinguishable cheeses, and it's no exaggeration to say

that they are made by a thousand different methods. This embarrassment of variables guarantees that no two cheeses will have exactly the same properties—they'll differ in appearance, flavor, and texture; and, alas, they'll differ in their melting behavior, too.

The Melting Categories of Cheese

The names of the cheeses in this table are generic, because cheeses go by many names and may have many variations. One farmer's artisanal Swiss may not be the same as the Swiss made by another farmer on the Alp down the road.

Stretchy & stringy melters

These are the cheeses we love on pizza, in panini, and stuffed into croquettes. They stay pretty much where we put them, without running all over the place, and they can form extremely long strings when pulled.

Mozzarella (aged and fresh)
Queso Oaxaca
Scamorza
Provolone
String cheese
Fresh cheddar cheese curds

Smooth & flowing melters

This category claims the largest number of cheeses. Some are viscous when melted, while others have little body. These cheeses are great for making toasted sandwiches; topping soups or vegetable tarts; stuffing into vegetables; adding richness to baked pasta dishes; and folding into biscuit, scone, and bread dough. They also blend smoothly into other dishes, such as polenta, mashed potatoes, risotto, and soufflés.

Asiago	Blue cheeses (they melt around the mold)
Cheddar	
Emmentaler	Soft-ripened cheeses like Brie & Camembert (the rind will not melt)
Fontina	
Gruyère	
Havarti	
Monterey Jack	*Parmigiano-Reggiano
Muenster	
Gouda	

Nonmelters

Some of these cheeses can be grilled, fried, or baked; though they may soften when heated, they won't lose their shape and flow. There are a few possible reasons that some cheeses don't melt: The cheese might be extremely high in salt. Or it might be low or high in acid, or it might contain high levels of whey proteins (during the cheese-making process, whey is removed from most cheese).

Halloumi
Fresh Mexican cheeses
 such as queso blanco, queso fresco, ranchero, cotija
Indian paneer
Cottage cheese
Ricotta
Fresh goat cheese
Feta
***Parmigiano-Reggiano**

Sources: Dr. Carol Chen and Dr. Dean Sommer of the Wisconsin Center for Dairy Research

Over time, various cultures have created dishes that show off the unique qualities of their local cheeses. (For a list of the cheeses most commonly used in several traditional dishes, see the bottom box on p. 34.) You're better off sticking to the tried and true—you'll never be able to make a saucy Swiss fondue from a stringy Italian mozzarella (just try to dip a piece of bread into it).

But what if you don't have the exact cheese specified in a recipe or what if you just want to throw together a cheese toast, a vegetable gratin, or a quesadilla? You've been cooking for at least (fill in the blank) years, and you know your way around the kitchen. So, is there room for creativity instead of the unquestioning use of every recipe's chosen cheese? Sure there is, if you follow my second rule:

Rule No. 2

Choose a cheese that's known to melt the way you want it to.

The problem is, when you're shopping for cheese, you can't necessarily predict its melting behavior by scrutinizing its appearance or the nutrition information label. Cheeses melt in lots of ways, and you can't depend on seemingly similar cheeses to melt identically. One semisoft cheese might behave quite differently from another for reasons that are as complex as the cheeses themselves.

But there's no need to plow through dozens of scientific research papers on the properties of melted cheese. All you really need to know is that cheeses fall into three broad melting categories: stretchy and stringy, smooth and flowing, and non-melting. When you want to get creative, look at the table at left, choose a cheese that has the melting characteristics you want, and you won't go far wrong.

*What about Parmigiano?

Very hard, aged cheeses like Parmigiano don't fit cleanly into these categories. If you finely grate them and add them to a sauce or a dish with moisture, they will melt smoothly, but due to their own lack of moisture, they won't melt very well alone.

(continued on p. 34)



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Now, one more rule: **Rule No.3** Be gentle with the heat.

Choosing the right cheese is important, but that's not the only secret to success. You must also treat the cheese kindly during cooking. Even if you're using the perfect cheese for a dish, too high a temperature or too much heating time can make its proteins tighten up, squeezing out both water and fat. Result: rubbery globs of protein awash in a pool of grease. When this happens to pizza (and it often does because pizza is baked in such a hot oven), it's not the worst thing in the world, but when it happens to a cheese fondue, you've got a flop on your hands. And, unfortunately, these changes aren't reversible. But there are a few steps you can take to keep your cheese from meeting this sad fate:

Shred it. By shredding cheese, you increase the surface area that's in contact with the heat source, which reduces the amount of time the cheese will take to melt.

Give it a head start. Bringing cheese to room temperature before you hit it with heat also lessens the amount of time the cheese needs to be exposed to heat before it melts.

Use low heat. Although not all recipes call for it, cheese prefers low heat. At higher temperatures, the proteins in the cheese are more likely to seize up and squeeze out fat and moisture. So if you need to finish off a cheese topping under the broiler, keep a watchful eye on it and take care to expose it to the heat only long enough for the cheese to melt.

Classic cheeses for classic dishes

- ❖ **Cheese fondue:** Emmentaler, Gruyère, Vacherin Fribourgeois, Appenzeller
- ❖ **Cheese toast and grilled cheese:** Cheddar, Fontina, American, Emmentaler, Gruyère, Jarlsberg
- ❖ **Eggplant or veal parmesan:** Mozzarella, Parmigiano
- ❖ **Lasagne:** Mozzarella, Ricotta, Parmigiano
- ❖ **Pizza:** Mozzarella, Fontina, Parmigiano, Asiago
- ❖ **Quesadilla:** Chihuahua, Monterey Jack, Queso Quesadilla
- ❖ **Welsh rabbit:** Cheshire, Cheddar, Colby, Emmentaler, Gruyère
- ❖ **Macaroni & cheese:** Sharp Cheddar, Colby, Emmentaler, American



What happens when cheese melts?

Cheese is a complex network of milk proteins with globules of butterfat and water dispersed throughout, and it doesn't melt the way simpler substances do. Ice melts at precisely 32°F; sugar melts at 365°F; even salt will melt abruptly if we heat it to 1474°F. But cheeses don't really melt in the same sense, transforming tidily from solid to liquid. When cheese is heated, the butterfat starts to melt at around 90°F, and the cheese softens. Then, as the temperature enters the 105° to 120°F range, the cheese's protein structure changes, and depending on what kind of cheese it is, it may begin to flow slowly like lava (think of the oozing Jack cheese in a quesadilla), or it might become stringy and elastic (think of the stretchy mozzarella on a pizza), or it might appear outwardly unchanged. On further heating, the water evaporates from the cheese, it starts to resolidify as the proteins tighten, and, if the heating continues, the cheese becomes brown, blisters, and eventually burns.

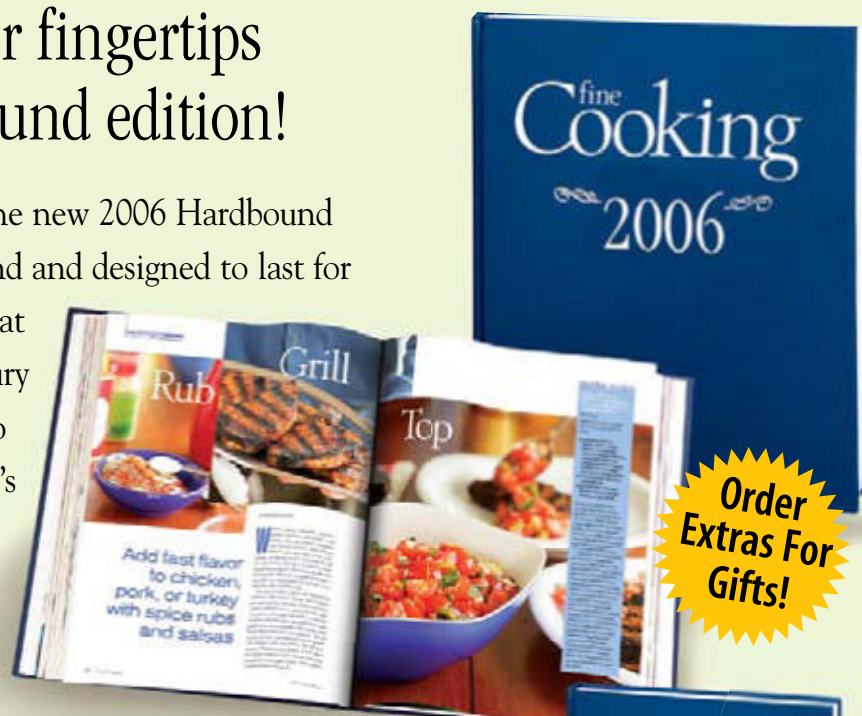
Robert L. Wolke, professor emeritus of chemistry at the University of Pittsburgh, writes the award-winning syndicated Food 101 column for the Washington Post. He is the author of several books, the latest of which is *What Einstein Told His Cook 2*. ♦

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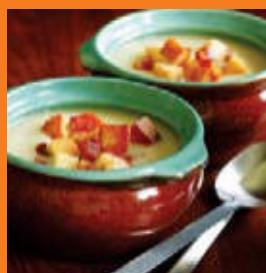
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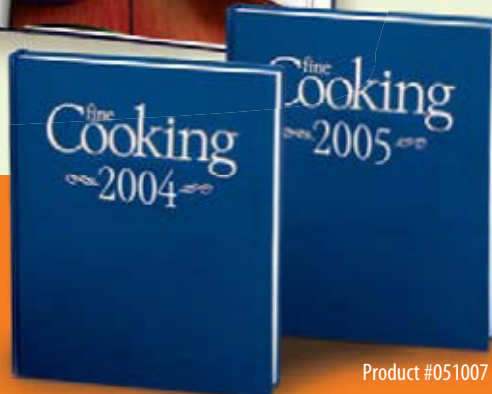
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Winning tip

Make “day old” bread in minutes

Sometimes I want to make French toast or bread pudding but don't have any “day-old” bread. So I place one oven rack in the center of the oven and another rack in the slot right beneath it. I put a baking sheet on the lower rack, insert bread slices through the slots of the upper rack so they stand up, and toast the bread on very low heat with the oven door slightly ajar. The bread dries out evenly on both sides with no need for turning.

—Mary Woosypiti, Cherokee, Oklahoma

A prize for the best tip

We want your best tips—we'll pay for the ones we publish—and we'll give a prize to the cleverest tip in each issue. Write to Tips, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506 or email fctips@taunton.com.

The prize for this issue's winner: A Bonjour 12-cup Maximus French press and a Bonjour Zen glass teapot with stainless steel infuser; value \$100.



Soak large batches of dried beans and freeze them

When a recipe calls for only 1 or 2 cups of presoaked dried beans, I often don't feel like going to the trouble for such a small amount.

Instead, I soak a large batch of dried beans overnight and then drain and freeze them in several small zip-top bags, each containing 1 cup. This way, when I need, say, 2 cups presoaked beans, all I have to do is grab two bags from the freezer and defrost them. If you have enough space, you can freeze several types of beans this way. Just make sure you label each bag to avoid confusion.

—Michelle Hoffman, via email

A hair dryer dries food quickly

I always keep a small travel hair dryer in a kitchen cabinet. I use it to dry a variety of foods, such as water-soaked potatoes for French fries before they go in the hot oil. It's quick and saves a lot of paper towels. Make sure to use it on the cool setting.

—Rick Morrison,
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan



Clean mushroom caps with a melon baller

When I'm stuffing mushrooms, I use a melon baller to dig out the stem and gills, creating perfectly round, unbroken caps for stuffing. I use the smaller scoop of my melon baller for button mushrooms and cremini and the larger scoop for portabella and other large-stemmed mushrooms.

—Cheryl L. Beauchamp,
Scotia, New York



A clear bowl lets you see the water when double-boiling

When I set up a double boiler, I use a heat-proof clear bowl (such as Pyrex), so I can monitor the simmering through the glass and make sure there's always enough water in the pot.

—Tizi Young, San Francisco

TOO GOOD TO FORGET

from *Fine Cooking* #8

Get every last bit off a food processor blade safely

Here's how to get the last sticky remnants off a food processor blade without endangering your fingers or fussing with a rubber scraper. First, empty the contents of the work bowl, but don't worry about getting it all. Reassemble the processor (with the blade) and pulse several times. The remainder of the ingredients will now be up against the side of the bowl—not on the blade—so you won't have to scrape it. Take the blade out to make it easy to scrape down the sides of the work bowl.

—Georgene Hawkins-Kunz,
Fircrest, Washington

Grind dried mushrooms to make seasoned dredging flour

If I have leftover dried mushrooms, I grind them to a fine powder in a coffee grinder. I then mix the powder with flour and other seasonings, such as smoked paprika, ground fennel seeds, or chopped fresh herbs, and dredge meats or fish in this seasoned flour before pan-searing or braising. It adds great flavor.

—Bruce Wood, Ottawa, Ontario

Gel ice keeps fish fresh

Instead of keeping fish and shellfish on watery, messy ice in the refrigerator, I use packets of gel ice (the kind used to ship perishable goods). I always keep a couple in the freezer. When I buy fish that I need to store in the refrigerator, I place an ice packet on a glass or ceramic dish, cover it with plastic wrap, lay the fish on top, and store it, covered, in the fridge. Once I've cooked the fish, I give the ice packet a thorough rinse and put it back in the freezer for later use.

—Diane McCann, Flower Mound, Texas

Plastic bins keep the freezer organized

I use small plastic bins with lids (the relatively inexpensive ones you find at housewares stores) to organize my small freezer. I label each bin according to the food type it holds: meat, fish, doughs, etc. I never have to dig around for things in the freezer, and I can fit more in it.

—Jennifer Grobe, Burlington, Ontario

Protect knives with potholders

I don't have a knife block in my kitchen, so I use pot handle holders to protect my knives in the drawer.

—Patty Rowles,
Pawleys Island, South Carolina ♦



STAFF CORNER

A pot lid can serve as a plate

When cooking a braised dish, you often have to brown the meat first and set it aside on a plate while you cook the aromatics. Instead of dirtying a plate, I use the lid of the braising pot and set it upside down on a burner or inside another pot so it sits level. A bonus: You get every last bit of juice back into the braise.

—Steve Hunter, art director

Roast Chicken for Today and Tomorrow

BY TONY ROSENFELD

Until relatively recently, I thought of roast chicken as nothing more than one great dinner. Any leftovers that resulted from the bird were just, well, leftovers—something I would try, often unsuccessfully, to use up in subsequent meals. I would like to be able to say that all this changed because something dramatic happened—like the birth of a child or a breakthrough in chicken technology. But the truth is that an editor called me up and asked me to write a book on how to roast chicken *and* cook with the leftovers. Now, a couple of years and many, many roast birds later, I've become a preacher of the leftover chicken gospel. All that roasting has convinced me that chicken on the second go-round is a very convenient and versatile addition to all sorts of weeknight dinners, from Caesar salad and tacos to quick stir-fries and pastas. With a roast chicken in the fridge, you have a head start on getting a delicious meal on the table fast.

Here's how it works: Roast two chickens when you have a little time. Serve one of them that night for dinner, and use the second one (plus any remaining meat from the first one) in lively dishes in the following few days. Just remember to plan your leftover meals ahead so that when you're at the market, you can pick up the ingredients you'll need.



Planning for leftovers. After serving the first roast chicken for supper, you can look forward to more great meals from the second one. From top: stir-fried chicken and snow peas with coconut rice, chicken tacos, and chicken Caesar salad.





Roast two chickens; serve one on Sunday and turn the other into delicious weeknight meals

Roast Chicken with Rosemary-Lemon Salt

One whole chicken serves four for dinner; the second yields enough to make two additional meals.

For a very flavorful roast chicken, I like to liven up plain old kosher salt by mixing it with some fresh rosemary and lemon zest. I use the food processor because it helps release the flavorful oils from the zest and the rosemary.

2 medium lemons
2 Tbs. plus 1 tsp. kosher salt
2 Tbs. chopped fresh rosemary
1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
2 4-lb. chickens, giblets and excess fat discarded
¼ cup unsalted butter, melted

Finely grate the zest from the lemons. In a food processor or mini chopper, combine the zest with the 2 Tbs. salt, the rosemary, and black pepper. Pulse several times to combine.

Sprinkle each chicken with this salt mixture both inside and outside the cavity and between the skin and the breast meat (use your fingers to gently open up a pocket between the two). Cut 1 of the lemons in half and stuff a half in the cavity of each bird. Reserve the remaining lemon for another use. Set the chickens on a wire rack atop a rimmed baking sheet, and refrigerate uncovered for at least 4 hours and up to 24 hours.

About 30 minutes before you're ready to roast the chickens, set an oven rack in the middle position and heat the oven to 425°F. Take the chickens out of the refrigerator and brush the butter uniformly over the skin. Sprinkle each chicken with ½ tsp. salt. Set each chicken, breast side up, on 1 or 2 racks

(preferably a large nonadjustable V-rack) in a large roasting pan. Let the chickens sit at room temperature while the oven heats.

Roast the chickens until the breasts are nicely browned and crisp, about 40 minutes. Gently flip each chicken (I like using tongs to clutch the inside of the cavity and the side of the bird) and roast until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the thigh registers 165°F to 170°F, about 20 minutes more. Let rest for 5 minutes before carving one of the chickens into pieces.

Tips for moist meat & crisp skin

A few techniques distinguish my roast chicken method from others you may have tried.

Salt the chicken ahead. Salting seasons the bird, of course, but if you can do it a day, or even a few hours, ahead, you'll get more flavorful meat and crisper skin. You can also flavor the salt with herbs and zest.

Use a rack. A V-shaped roasting rack cradles the chicken and allows its juices to drip away, leaving even the bottom skin crisp.

Start breast side up and flip halfway through. Starting with the breast up ensures brown, crispy skin. Turning the bird over keeps the breast moist while the slower-cooking legs finish roasting.

Leftover basics— getting the most from chicken #2

Handling tips

After serving the first chicken for dinner, wrap the leftovers in plastic wrap. Let the second chicken cool to room temperature and wrap in plastic as well. I've found that if it's well wrapped and refrigerated, the chicken will stay relatively moist and tender for up to 4 days. Here are a few more pointers for making the most of your leftover chicken.

DON'T CARVE UNTIL YOU HAVE TO. Sliced, diced, and otherwise cut-up chicken dries out and spoils faster than a whole one, so keep the chicken whole or in big pieces.

DISCARD THE SKIN. The crisp skin of a warm roast chicken is wonderful, but once it's cold, the skin tends to become unpleasantly rubbery. For this reason, I don't use it in my leftover dishes.

MATCH THE MEAT TO THE PREPARATION. Dark-meat leftovers tend to have a richer flavor and retain their moisture, so they're perfect for cooked dishes. White-meat leftovers are more apt to dry out when reheated, so their delicate flavor and texture do better in sandwiches and salads.

KEEP THE COOKING TO A MINIMUM. As leftover chicken is already cooked (and as chicken is lean to start with, particularly the breast), it's best to avoid further cooking. Whenever possible, I try to fold the chicken in at the end just to warm it up.

How much meat from a 4-lb. bird?

You can expect one roast chicken to serve four people nicely for dinner. A whole second bird should yield about 5 cups of meat, enough to make two of the three recipes on these pages.

LEFTOVER AMOUNT	YIELD (sliced or diced)
1 whole chicken	5 cups
½ chicken	2½ cups
1 breast	1 cup
1 leg (thigh and drumstick)	1 cup

How to carve

Because leftover chicken is generally cold when you work with it, it's a lot easier to carve. I like to use a paring knife and my fingers to feel for the breastbone and pry off the breast meat, making sure to pick off any meat that remains behind on the bones. I then slice to the bone on the drumsticks and thighs, peel off the meat, and sort through and discard any fatty patches or gnarly tendons.

As good as the wings are when they're hot, they're not well suited to picking for leftovers—there's little yield for all that work. So if they haven't been eaten on the first go-round, I usually just sprinkle them with some salt and eat them cold while I work on my leftover dish.



Coconut Rice with Chicken & Snow Peas

Serves four.

The rich coconut rice is the perfect counterpoint to a quick chicken stir-fry in a soy-jalapeño sauce. For color, add some red bell pepper to the stir-fry. You could also sprinkle with some toasted coconut as a finishing touch.

1½ cups jasmine rice or long-grain white rice
3 Tbs. minced fresh ginger
¼ cup canola oil
¾ cup unsweetened coconut milk (preferably not "lite")
¾ tsp. kosher salt
3 Tbs. soy sauce



2 Tbs. rice vinegar
1 Tbs. light brown sugar
2 tsp. cornstarch
2 large green or red jalapeños,
cored, seeded, and finely diced
½ lb. snow peas (about 3 cups),
trimmed
2½ to 3 cups diced leftover
roast chicken (preferably dark
meat); see recipe, p. 39
⅓ cup chopped fresh cilantro

Rinse the rice in three changes of cold water, or until the water becomes only slightly cloudy from the rice. Drain well in a sieve.

Heat 1½ Tbs. of the ginger with 2 Tbs. of the oil in a small (2-qt.) saucepan over medium-high heat until it begins to sizzle steadily

and becomes fragrant, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the rice and cook, stirring, until the grains and ginger start to brown in places, about 2 minutes. Stir in the coconut milk, 1¾ cups water, and the salt. Bring to a boil and then reduce to a simmer. Cook until the liquid has reduced to about the same level as the top of the rice, 5 to 7 minutes. Cover, reduce the heat to low, and cook without disturbing the rice until the liquid is absorbed and the rice is tender, 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, whisk together the soy sauce, rice vinegar, brown sugar, and cornstarch in a small bowl. Stir in ½ cup water and set aside.

In a large skillet over medium-high heat, cook the jalapeños and the remaining 1½ Tbs. ginger in the remaining 2 Tbs. oil until they sizzle steadily for about 30 seconds. Add the snow peas and cook until bright green and browned in places, about 1 minute. Whisk the soy mixture to recombine and add it and the chicken to the skillet. Cook, stirring, until the sauce thickens and the chicken just heats through, about 2 minutes. Stir in half of the cilantro, reduce the heat to low, and cook for another 2 minutes.

Fluff the rice with a fork and serve with the chicken and snow peas, sprinkled with the remaining cilantro.

shortcut

ROTISSERIE CHICKEN WORKS WELL, TOO

If you'd like to make some of these chicken dishes but don't have the time to roast the bird yourself, store-bought rotisserie chickens are a good option. In addition to their convenience, these prepared birds are flavorful and affordable.



Soft Chicken Tacos with the Works

Serves four to six.

Look for chipotles en adobo in the Mexican food section of the grocery store.

2 large ripe avocados, pitted
2 limes, 1 juiced and 1 cut into wedges
1½ tsp. kosher salt; more as needed
¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper; more as needed
2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1 small yellow onion, finely diced
1 tsp. chili powder
Scant ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
1 14½-oz. can petite-diced tomatoes, drained

1 medium chipotle chile, finely diced, plus 1 to 2 Tbs. adobo sauce (from a can of chipotles en adobo)
2½ to 3 cups leftover roast chicken, shredded or cut into thin strips; see recipe, p. 39
12 small corn tortillas, warmed
6 oz. queso fresco or feta, crumbled (1⅓ cups)
3 cups thinly sliced red cabbage (about 6 oz.)
⅔ cup fresh cilantro leaves, washed and patted dry

Mash the avocados with the lime juice in a medium bowl. Season with about 1 tsp. of the salt and the pepper, or to taste.

Set a large, heavy-based skillet over medium heat. Add the oil and

onion, sprinkle with the remaining ½ tsp. salt, and cook, stirring, until softened and translucent, about 6 minutes. Add the chili powder and cinnamon and cook, stirring, for 30 seconds. Add the tomatoes, chipotle, and adobo sauce and cook, stirring, for 5 minutes, mashing the tomatoes with a wooden spoon. Stir in the chicken, cover, reduce the heat to low, and cook until the chicken heats through, about 10 minutes. Taste, and season with salt and pepper if needed.

Let diners assemble their own tacos by spreading the warm tortillas with the avocado and then topping with the chicken, cheese, cabbage, cilantro, and a squeeze of juice from the lime wedges.

Lemony Chicken Caesar Salad with Garlic-Parmesan Toasts

Serves four to six as a main course.

This take on Caesar salad is lighter and brighter than most. Lemon juice and zest punch up the vinaigrette, while a little mascarpone, instead of the traditional raw egg yolks, imparts richness.

FOR THE VINAIGRETTE:

1 lemon
¼ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
2 Tbs. mascarpone (or cream cheese)
2 tsp. Dijon mustard
1 small clove garlic, chopped, sprinkled with a pinch of kosher salt, and mashed to a paste
¼ tsp. Worcestershire sauce
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme
Couple dashes of Tabasco
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper



FOR THE SALAD:

2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1 small clove garlic, chopped,
sprinkled with a pinch of kosher
salt, and mashed to a paste
1/8 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
1/2 baguette, cut into eight
1/2-inch-thick slices on the
extreme diagonal so they're
about 6 inches long
3/4 cup freshly grated
Parmigiano-Reggiano
2 cups thinly sliced leftover
roast chicken; see recipe, p. 39
1 lb. romaine hearts (about 2
medium), cored, washed, spun
dry, and cut in 2-inch pieces

Make the vinaigrette: Finely grate about 1 Tbs. zest from the lemon. Squeeze the lemon to get 2 Tbs. juice. In a blender or mini chopper, purée (as much as possible) the lemon juice, Parmigiano, mascarpone, mustard, garlic, and Worcestershire sauce, scraping the sides as needed. While puréeing, drizzle in the oil, slowly at first and then in a more steady stream as the mixture

thickens and emulsifies. Thin the vinaigrette with water if needed. Add the lemon zest, thyme, and Tabasco and purée. Taste and season generously with salt and pepper (about 1 tsp. of each) and more lemon juice if you like.

Prepare the salad: Heat the oven to 425°F. In a small bowl, mix the oil, garlic, and red pepper flakes. Set the baguette slices on a baking sheet and brush them with the oil mixture. Sprinkle with 1/4 cup of the Parmigiano. Bake until browned, 10 to 12 minutes.

In a small bowl, toss the chicken with about 1/4 cup of the dressing. In a large bowl, toss the romaine and 1/4 cup of the Parmigiano with enough dressing to coat lightly (you might not need it all). Add salt and pepper to taste.

Put the dressed greens on plates and top with the chicken and a drizzle of dressing, if any remains. Sprinkle with the remaining 1/4 cup Parmigiano and some black pepper and serve immediately with the toasts.

And for next time, try one of these ideas

Leftover roast chicken is good in countless dishes. Here are a few more suggestions.

Pasta

Sauté canned artichokes with garlic, lemon, and black olives. Fold in shredded chicken and toss with fettuccine. For a home-style lo mein, stir-fry chicken with fresh Chinese noodles, bean sprouts, cabbage, and minced garlic and ginger.

Soups & stews

Create a flavorful soup by jazzing up chicken broth with some vegetables, spices, and herbs. Add the leftover shredded chicken towards the end of cooking. For a stew, use heartier ingredients, like sausage, potatoes, bacon, and tomatoes.

Casseroles

Toss diced chicken with a béchamel sauce and asparagus or broccoli, sprinkle with Parmigiano, and bake until golden brown. Or toss sliced chicken with feta, olives, and sun-dried tomatoes, top with a layer of phyllo or puff pastry, and then bake until crisp and golden brown.

Salads

Punch up a creamy chicken salad with sliced apple, toasted walnuts, and cilantro, and add some curry powder to the mayo. Or try substituting chicken for the tuna in a niçoise salad and toss with blanched green beans, black olives, halved cherry tomatoes, and a mustardy vinaigrette.

Sandwiches

Of all the things I make with roast chicken, I turn to sandwiches most often.

Grilled cheese with chicken & fresh herbs: Stack chicken, a couple of slices of cheddar and tomato, and fresh herbs on some good multigrain bread and grill until the cheese melts.

Chicken Reuben: Layer thinly sliced chicken, Swiss cheese, sauerkraut, and Thousand Island dressing on rye bread and grill until browned and melted.

Sesame chicken with cucumbers & scallions: Toss sliced chicken with soy sauce, hoisin sauce, sesame oil, and toasted sesame seeds. Pair with sliced cucumber and scallions and wrap with lavash.

Southwestern chicken sandwich with avocado & tomato: Purée a canned chipotle chile with a little balsamic vinegar, olive oil, and Dijon mustard and toss with leftover chicken. Layer with mashed avocado, red onion, tomato, and cilantro on toasted ciabatta.

Tony Rosenfeld is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking and the author of Taunton's 150 Things to Make with Roast Chicken, due out this spring. ♦



BY SUSIE MIDDLETON

Crowd-Pleasing

It's a little embarrassing to admit that I have certain recipes I use over and over again for casual entertaining. You'd think the editor of *Fine Cooking* could wow her guests with something new and fresh every time. But when you discover a dish that's truly easy and so delicious that absolutely everyone loves it, it's hard not to get hooked on it.

Not so much a recipe, these potatoes are more of a technique. It's really a double-cooking method. You first boil little red or yellow potatoes to get them tender. While they're still warm, you gently flatten them into patties. (You can do this hours ahead.) While your party guests are arriving, you crank up the heat in your oven (convection's even better) and douse the patties in lots of olive oil and kosher salt. In the hot oven, the potato patties sizzle and roast and quickly get crisp around the edges. But because they were first cooked with moist heat, they stay moist and tender inside.

That's really all there is to it. Turn the potatoes out onto a serving platter and let your guests dig in. For a crowd, you can keep doubling the recipe at right as much as you like, as long as you have sheet pans and room in the oven. Of course, you don't have to have a party to make these. They're just as nice served as a side dish with roast chicken or even meatloaf. And garnished with a bit of sour cream and chives, they make a nice starter.



Crispy Potatoes

With a simple ingredient list and a mostly make-ahead technique, these delicious potatoes are perfect for parties

Crispy Smashed Roasted Potatoes

Serves four as a side dish.

12 to 15 baby red or yellow potatoes (about 1½ oz. each; 1½ to 2 inches in diameter)
2¾ tsp. kosher salt
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil



1. Boil

Put the potatoes in a large saucepan (preferably in one layer) and cover with at least an inch of water. Add 2 tsp. kosher salt to the water. Bring the water to a boil over high heat, reduce to a simmer, and cook the potatoes until they are completely tender and can be easily pierced with a metal or wood skewer. Make sure they are cooked through but don't overcook. The total cooking time will be 30 to 35 minutes.

While the potatoes are cooking, set up a double layer of clean dishtowels on your countertop. As the potatoes finish cooking, remove them individually from the water, and let them drain and sit for just a minute or two on the dishtowels.



2. Flatten

Fold another dishtowel into quarters, and using it as a cover, gently press down on one potato with the palm of your hand to flatten it to a thickness of about ½ inch. Repeat with all the potatoes. Don't worry if some break apart a bit; you can still use them.



3. Cool

Cover a large rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil; put a sheet of parchment on top of the foil. Transfer the flattened potatoes carefully to the baking sheet and let them cool completely at room temperature.

If making ahead, cover loosely with plastic wrap and refrigerate. Otherwise, continue on to the roasting directions.



4. Roast

Remove the pan of potatoes from the refrigerator, if prepared ahead. Heat the oven to 450°F. Alternatively, if you have a convection function, turn it on and set the temperature at 400°F. Sprinkle the potatoes with about ¾ tsp. salt and pour the olive oil over them. Lift the potatoes gently to make sure some of the oil goes underneath them and that they are well coated on both sides. Roast the potatoes until they're crispy and deep brown around the edges, about 30 minutes if using a convection oven, 30 to 40 minutes if roasting conventionally, turning over once gently with a spatula or tongs halfway through cooking. Serve hot.

MAKE AHEAD TIP:

Do the busy work—boiling and flattening the potatoes—up to 8 hours ahead. Let the potatoes cool completely, and store them on the pan, lightly covered, in the fridge. Then all you have to do at the last minute is Step 4: coat with oil and salt and roast.

Susie Middleton is the editor of Fine Cooking. ♦

Spice Up Your Vegetable

A few sassy spices and a simple one-pan technique are all you need to create these flavorful side dishes

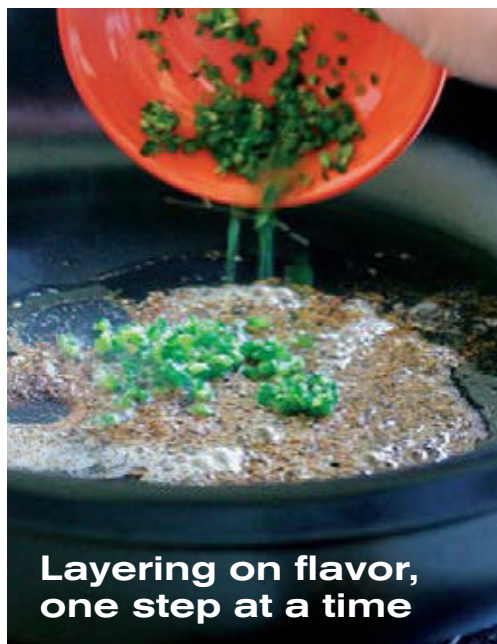
BY SUVIR SARAN

In India, there is a Hindi saying that goes something like this: Lentils and beans are our spines, but vegetables make up our bodies. No matter what the occasion, we always have a few vegetable dishes, called *sabzis*, on the table. Here in America, I serve a lot of these dishes at my restaurant, and they're usually the foundation of the meals I cook for friends at home. Because they're so nourishing and warming, I think of them as Indian comfort food. They may be a little spicier or have one or two more exotic ingredients than the vegetable side dishes you're used to, but they're just as versatile and nutritious, and they're loaded with flavor.

Slower and spicier than a Chinese stir-fry. I refer to *sabzis* as Indian stir-fries because, like Chinese stir-fries, they're easy to prepare, with all of the vegetables cooked in one pan. But unlike Chinese stir-fries, which rely on flash cooking and added sauces and thickeners, Indian *sabzis* employ more spices and aromatics and a slower cooking method to develop deep flavor and tender texture.

You can learn the basic steps for creating an Indian stir-fry by making any of the recipes on these pages. Then you can improvise your own dishes with my lists of suggested spices and vegetables on p. 48, and by following the general method shown at right.

A wide, sloped pan is great for this kind of cooking. In India, we use a wok-like vessel called a *kadai* to cook these vegetables, but any pan with a generous girth (12 inch diameter is good) and rounded sides works well. You could use a large skillet or wok, a Dutch oven, or a brazier (for sources, see p. 76). The width is important because you want the liquids released from the vegetables to reduce quickly, and the rounded sides make stirring easier.



Layering on flavor, one step at a time

First, cook the spices & aromatics

Start by heating any long-cooking spices with oil in a wide, shallow pan over medium-high heat. When they're fragrant and sizzling, after just 2 to 3 minutes, add any short-cooking spices. Give them a minute or two to get fragrant and sizzle. Then add any delicate aromatics (garlic, ginger, etc.) and cook, stirring vigorously so nothing burns, again just until fragrant, no more than a minute. (For lists of spices and aromatics, turn the page.)



Next, stir-fry the vegetables

Add the vegetables in two phases (turn the page for vegetable options). The first to go in are the longer-cooking vegetables. When they've started to soften, add any quicker-cooking vegetables, occasionally stirring and scraping the bottom of the pan as they cook. (Denser vegetables, such as cauliflower, potatoes, and broccoli, do better if covered; low-moisture vegetables like green beans might need a little water to help them along.)

Stir-Fries, Indian Style



Cabbage & Carrot Stir-Fry with Toasted Cumin & Lime

Serves six.

This is really versatile—you can serve it as a side dish, as a chilled salad (like coleslaw), or use it as a filling for enchiladas.

- 1½ tsp. cumin seeds**
- 2 Tbs. canola oil**
- ¾ tsp. ground coriander**
- ½ tsp. freshly cracked black peppercorns**
- ½ jalapeño (seeds and ribs removed if you prefer a milder flavor), finely chopped**
- 6 cups thinly sliced green cabbage (about ⅔ medium cabbage)**
- 2 cups julienned or grated carrots (about ¾ lb.)**
- 2½ tsp. kosher salt; more to taste**
- 1½ tsp. granulated sugar**
- ½ cup loosely packed fresh cilantro sprigs, finely chopped**
- 3 Tbs. fresh lime juice**

Toast 1 tsp. of the cumin seeds in a small skillet over medium-high heat, stirring frequently, until deeply browned and beginning to smoke, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer to a bowl to cool. Grind to a fine powder in a spice grinder.

Heat the oil with the remaining ½ tsp. cumin seeds, the coriander, and peppercorns in a large wok, Dutch oven, or 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat, and cook until the cumin is browned, about 2 minutes. Add the jalapeño and cook until sizzling and just starting to soften, 30 to 60 seconds, and then add the cabbage and carrots. (If using a skillet, the pan will be crowded at first.) Cook, stirring occasionally until the cabbage has wilted yet is still al dente, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in the freshly ground cumin, salt, and sugar, and cook for 30 seconds. Remove the skillet from the heat. Stir in the cilantro and lime juice and taste for seasoning. Serve warm, at room temperature, or cold.

Finally, finish with herbs & citrus

For an extra layer of fresh flavor, stir in fresh herbs like cilantro or mint, and squeeze lemon or lime juice on top. If you like, you can serve the dish with extra lemon or lime wedges or some reserved chopped fresh cilantro on the side.

Then, stir in delicate spices & seasonings

When the vegetables are tender, stir in the delicate finishing spices like cayenne or garam masala. These can turn bitter if heated too long, so cook for just 1 minute and then remove from the heat. This is also when you season with salt and perhaps a little sugar to balance the flavors.

tip: Seasoning with salt at the end of the cooking process may seem unconventional, but it actually works better in these stir-fries. Salt encourages vegetables to break down and release water, and that is not the goal in these dishes.

Improvise your own Indian stir-fries

Pick from the lists of vegetables and spices here, and then follow the general method shown on pp. 46–47 to bring the dish together.

Choose your vegetables

For these dishes, I like to classify vegetables by cooking time. You can include both shorter- and longer-cooking vegetables in your stir-fry; simply add the longer-cooking ones to the pan first to give them a headstart. Unless otherwise noted, you should chop, slice, or dice the vegetable into bite-size pieces.

LONGER COOKING

Broccoli
(cut into florets)
Carrots
Celery root
Hearty greens
like collards,
kale, and
mustard greens
Mushrooms
Onions,
red or yellow
Potatoes
Radishes
Sweet potatoes
Tomatoes
Turnips
Winter squash
like butternut
and acorn

SHORTER COOKING

Asparagus
Baby spinach
Bell peppers
Cabbage, white or
red (shredded)
Carrots (grated)
Cauliflower
(cut into florets)
Coconut,
unsweetened
(shredded)
Fresh corn kernels
Green beans
Green peas
Summer squash
like zucchini,
pattypan, and
yellow
Swiss chard
Tomatoes

tip: Add tomatoes with the longer-cooking vegetables for a jammy, saucy consistency or with the shorter-cooking vegetables so they retain more body and texture.

tip: Coconut can be added with the short-cooking vegetables for a toasty flavor, or at the end of cooking for a lighter note.

Pick spices & aromatics

Here's where you give your stir-fry its personality. As with the vegetables, I add these to the pan in stages, depending on how much heat they need to open up their flavors.

LONGER COOKING

Bay leaves
Cardamom seeds
Cinnamon sticks
Fenugreek seeds
Mustard seeds
Nigella seeds
Whole cloves
Whole peppercorns

SHORTER COOKING

Coriander, seeds
or ground
Cumin seeds
Curry leaves
Dried red chiles, whole
or flakes
Fenugreek leaves
Freshly ground pepper
Turmeric, ground

AROMATICS

(add after the spices)

Garlic
Ginger
Jalapeño

DELICATE SPICES

(add at the end of cooking)

Cayenne
Garam masala
Ground cumin, toasted

Mushroom Stir-Fry with Onions & Tomatoes

Serves six.

If you can find fenugreek leaves, by all means, use them—their bitterness nicely counters the sweetness of the caramelized onions. This would be lovely with steak or chicken.

3 Tbs. canola oil
¼ cup dried fenugreek leaves
or **½ cup finely chopped fresh fenugreek (optional)**; see **From Our Test Kitchen, p. 70**
2 small whole dried red chiles (optional)
1 Tbs. cumin seeds
2 tsp. ground coriander
1 tsp. ground cumin
½ tsp. ground turmeric
2 lb. cremini (baby bella) mushrooms, cleaned, stems trimmed, and sliced ¼ inch thick (8 cups)
2 medium red onions, peeled, halved lengthwise and thinly sliced crosswise into half-moons (3 cups)
2 medium tomatoes, finely chopped (about 2½ cups)
1 tsp. homemade or store-bought garam masala; see p. 70
¼ tsp. cayenne (optional)
2 tsp. kosher salt; more to taste
¼ cup fresh cilantro, chopped
1 to 2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice

Heat the canola oil with the fenugreek leaves and chiles (if using), cumin seeds, coriander, ground cumin, and turmeric in a large wok, Dutch oven, or 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the cumin is browned and the chiles darken, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the mushrooms, onions, and tomatoes, mix them into the spices, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the liquid has evaporated and the vegetables look evenly browned, softened, and dry, 15 to 20 minutes; there will be a lot of liquid in the beginning—just keep cooking, stirring more frequently as the vegetables become drier.

Add the garam masala, cayenne (if using), and salt, and cook 1 minute longer. Stir in the cilantro and lemon juice, taste for seasoning, and serve.



Potato Stir-Fry with Mint & Cilantro

Serves six.

This would go well with a roasted chicken or even scrambled eggs.

- 2 lb. red potatoes (about 6 medium), peeled and cut into ¾-inch cubes (about 5 cups)**
- 3 Tbs. canola oil**
- 1 Tbs. yellow mustard seeds**
- 24 curry leaves (optional); see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 70**
- 1 small whole dried red chile**
- 2 tsp. ground coriander**
- 2 tsp. cumin seeds**
- ½ tsp. ground turmeric**
- 2 medium cloves garlic, minced**
- 1 jalapeño (seeds and ribs removed if you prefer a milder flavor), finely chopped**
- 1 medium red onion, finely chopped**
- 2 tsp. kosher salt; more to taste**

- ½ tsp. cayenne (optional)**
- ⅔ cup fresh mint leaves, finely chopped**
- ½ cup loosely packed fresh cilantro sprigs, finely chopped**
- Juice of ½ lemon (1 to 2 Tbs.)**

Put the potatoes in a medium bowl, cover with cool water, and set aside.

Heat the canola oil and the mustard seeds in a large wok or 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until the mustard seeds start to sizzle and pop, 1 to 2 minutes (use a splatter screen, if you have one, so the seeds don't pop out of the pan). Add the curry leaves (if using), chile, coriander, cumin seeds, and turmeric and cook, stirring occasionally, until the cumin browns and the curry leaves are crisp, 1 to 1½ minutes. Stir in the garlic and

jalapeño and cook until the garlic is fragrant, about 30 seconds.

Drain the potatoes and add them to the pan along with the onions. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the potatoes are translucent around the edges, 2 to 3 minutes. Cover, reduce the heat to medium-low, and cook, stirring and scraping the bottom of the pan every 5 minutes, until the potatoes are just tender, 12 to 15 minutes. (Reduce the heat to low if the potatoes seem to be burning.)

Add the salt and cayenne (if using) and cook for 30 seconds. Stir in the mint, cilantro, and lemon juice, cover the pan, and let the potatoes sit off the heat for 10 minutes. Scrape up the browned bits and stir them into the potatoes. Taste, add more salt if needed, and serve.

Green Bean Stir-Fry with Shredded Coconut

Serves six.

Instead of green beans, you could make this with another vegetable cut into bite-size pieces—try zucchini or cabbage, two of my favorites.

- ¼ cup canola oil**
- 1 Tbs. yellow mustard seeds**
- 24 curry leaves, roughly torn (optional); see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 70**
- 1¼ tsp. cumin seeds**
- 2 lb. green beans, trimmed and cut into bite-size pieces (about 7 cups)**
- ¾ cup unsweetened shredded coconut**
- 1½ tsp. kosher salt; more to taste**

Heat the oil and the mustard seeds in a large wok or skillet over medium-high heat until the mustard seeds start to sizzle and pop, about 1 minute (use a splatter screen, if you have one, so the seeds don't pop out of the pan). Add the curry leaves (if using) and the cumin seeds and cook, stirring often, until the cumin becomes fragrant and browned, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the green beans and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in the coconut and 1 cup water and bring to a simmer. Cover the pan, reduce the heat to medium low, and cook until the green beans are tender, 8 to 10 minutes. Uncover, increase the heat to medium, and cook until all of the water has evaporated, stirring often, 2 to 5 minutes. Stir in the salt, taste, and add more salt if needed.

Suvir Saran is the executive chef at Dévi restaurant in New York City and the author of Indian Home Cooking. ♦

Find more Indian recipes plus tips, tools, and a guide to Indian ingredients at finecooking.com

How to Host

Get to know your palate and discover the chocolates, cheeses, and olive oils you love

BY DINA CHENEY

When I teach cooking classes, students often ask me, “How much salt should I add to this dish?” or “Which chocolate should I use?” And I always reply, “It’s up to you. You should prepare food that you—not I—will love.”

But when it comes to matters of the palate, how do you go about learning what you love? The answer is simple: Just keep tasting. One of the most effective and enjoyable ways to get in touch with your flavor preferences is to organize a tasting party for your friends. It’s easy. Simply gather several food or drink products—it could be cheese, honey, apples, balsamic vinegar, tea, ale, almost anything really—and then taste them side by side.

At such structured tastings, you’ll learn how you react to different flavors, and you’ll broaden the repertoire of ingredients you can use in your cooking. For example, if you taste several different plain dark chocolate bars at the same time, you might discover that you prefer bitter and intense, rather than mild, varieties; consequently, you may end up using chocolates with higher cacao content when you bake. Through a honey tasting, you might discover chestnut and acacia honeys. Or by tasting cheeses, you might find that you favor washed-rind varieties.

In this article, I’ll provide general guidelines for putting together a tasting party and walk you through three sample tastings: of sharp Cheddar, chocolate, and extra-virgin olive oil. From there, you can explore other possibilities on your own.

How to taste

Tasting is different from eating. When you taste, you slow down, pay attention, and savor the food in a structured fashion, evaluating the samples’ appearance, aroma, flavor, texture, and finish. Then you ask yourself, Did I enjoy this product? Would I buy it again?



1

Select a category.

Choose a food or drink you and your guests enjoy and would like to learn more about, such as extra-virgin olive oil, chocolate, cheese, or something else you’re curious about.

2

Narrow your focus.

Research your topic and do a little pre-tasting. Choose a theme to help you tie your choices together. (It’s important to compare apples to apples: Don’t include flavored chocolate bars, flavored truffles, semisweet chocolate bars, and white chocolate bars in the same tasting.) Then, narrow the field to six samples—enough to experience a lot of tastes but not so many that you’ll fatigue your palate.

a Tasting Party



3

Shop for all the samples and palate cleansers, plus food and drink for serving before and after the tasting, if you want. If you can't find what you're looking for locally, visit online specialty food merchants, such as Zingermans.com, Igourmet.com, or Agferrari.com. (For more sources, see p. 76.)

4

Organize everything, from tableware to paper and pens (you can download tasting sheets at FineCooking.com). Set your table and arrange the samples in tasting order, moving from more mildly flavored items to those with stronger flavors. If you try extremely flavorful samples first, you won't be able to fully experience the milder products. Also, it's a good idea to provide background information about each sample, including price and where to buy.

5

Conduct the tasting. Introduce the first sample and lead your guests through the tasting steps, encouraging them to take time to focus and jot down their thoughts. Then discuss the sample. Have everyone cleanse their palates with water and mild bread (I like baguette slices) or crackers to prepare for the next sample.

Blind vs. open

In blind tastings, the samples are disguised so that your preconceived notions don't color your assessments. That's fine for professional events, but for home parties I prefer open tastings, in which the samples are identified. Open tastings are easier to organize and more relaxed, yet they're still very educational.

[Download](#) printable tasting sheets at finecooking.com

Tasting: Sharp Cheddar Cheese



Theme: From supermarket to farmhouse

First, some definitions: Cheddar refers to cheeses in which the curds have been cut, stacked, drained, restacked, milled, salted, and pressed. Within this category, sharp Cheddars are those that have been aged for enough time to allow strong flavors to develop—in general, longer aging equals sharper flavor. Among sharp Cheddars, differences abound, especially between supermarket and farmhouse varieties. The former tend to be milder and less complex than the latter, which are typically produced in small batches right on the dairy farm. In this tasting, you'll experience the differences for yourself.

If you'd rather try another theme, you could compare Cheddars that have been aged for different lengths of time, resulting in increasing amounts of sharpness, or sample American, British, Irish, and Canadian products.

How to select varieties:

Purchase six sharp Cheddars, including both artisanal (farmhouse) and mass-produced (from the supermarket). Since farmhouse Cheddars are generally long-aged and thus extra sharp, buy the longest-aged supermarket products you can find to even things out a bit.

Here are some you might include: Keen's Cheddar (British farmhouse, raw milk, aged about two years), Fiscalini Bandaged Cheddar (American farmhouse, raw milk, aged about 16 months), Montgomery's Cheddar (British farmhouse, raw milk, aged up to two years), Cabot Extra Sharp (American, pasteurized milk, aged up to 18 months), Grafton Village 2-Year Extra Aged (American, raw milk), and Tillamook Sharp Cheddar (American, pasteurized milk, aged more than nine months). (For sources, see p. 76.)

How to taste cheese:

Initially, you'll want to taste the cheeses alone. After that first round, though, it's fun to try them with accompaniments, such as mango chutney and pecans.

Cleanse your palate between samples by drinking cool (not cold) water and eating bread or crackers.

Tasting steps:

First look at the cheese and assess its color. Rub a small piece between your fingers and consider its texture—is it very hard or semihard? Is it at all crumbly or buttery?

Hold the cheese in front of your nose and inhale. What are the aromas (for example, nutty or grassy)?

Now place the cheese on your tongue and press it to the roof of your mouth. Start chewing, and evaluate the mouthfeel and flavor notes (for example, strong, nutty, caramel).

Swallow the cheese and evaluate its finish. What flavors remain in your mouth? How long do they linger?

Finally, ask everyone whether they enjoyed the cheese.

Tasting: Dark Chocolate



Theme:
From semisweet
to unsweetened

A chocolate bar's personality depends largely on how much cacao, as opposed to other ingredients like sugar and vanilla, it contains. A higher percentage of cacao means a more intense chocolate flavor. In this tasting, you'll become familiar with the different flavor profiles of semisweet, bittersweet, and unsweetened chocolate. Bittersweet chocolate contains 35% or more cacao content, while unsweetened chocolate is 100% cacao. "Semisweet" chocolate is a more informal classification but generally refers to bars with 15% to 35% cacao content.

Other themes you might consider: only 70% cacao bars from around the world; only French dark chocolate; or French versus Belgian dark chocolate.

How to select varieties:

For this tasting, include six plain bars, each with a different cacao percentage. Keep in mind that bars labeled "semisweet" are often produced by mass-market companies, which may not include percentages on their labels.

Possible chocolates to include: Rapunzel semisweet chocolate bar, Chocolove 55% cacao bar, Santander 65% bar, Scharffen Berger 70% cacao bittersweet chocolate, Valrhona 85% cacao dark chocolate bar, and Ghirardelli 100% cacao unsweetened chocolate. (For sources, see p. 76.)

How to taste chocolate:

Taste the chocolate alone. Cleanse your palate between samples by drinking cool (not cold) water and eating bread or crackers.

Tasting steps:

Look at the chocolate: Is it shiny? Does it break cleanly?

Hold it in front of your nose and inhale its aromas. Does it remind you of nuts, coffee, tobacco, fruit? Is it mild or strong?

Now place the chocolate on your tongue and let it melt for several seconds. Consider its flavor notes (for example, floral, smoky, acidic, red fruit, caramel, or raisins) and texture (for example, dry and chalky, creamy, smooth). Then, bite down—how do the flavor and texture change?

Next, swallow the chocolate and evaluate its finish—does it dissipate quickly or linger? (A long finish is considered positive.)

Finally, did you enjoy the chocolate?

Tasting: Extra-Virgin Olive Oil for Drizzling



Theme: Around the world

As with wine, provenance is a huge factor with extra-virgin olive oils. The *terroir*, or the nature of the land on which the olives grow, is important, and so too are the olive varieties used and how they're processed in that production area. For example, Tuscan olive oils are usually green and peppery, largely because Tuscan olives are picked when young, green, and pungent. Provençal olive oils, on the other hand, are often nutty and buttery, due to the later picking of the olives, when they're ripe and fattier. In this tasting, you'll learn which area's extra-virgin olive oils are to your liking—for drizzling over bread, vegetables, cheeses, meats, and fish.

Alternatively, you could opt for another tasting theme, such as single varietals (oils made with a single variety of olive) or regional comparisons (all from a specific region, such as Tuscany or Provence).

How to select varieties:

For this tasting, purchase six bottles of high-quality, unflavored extra-virgin olive oil, each from a different country.

Consider products representing France (especially Provence), Italy (Tuscany, Liguria, or Sicily), the United States (California), Greece, Spain, and Chile.

Some recommended brands are Lucini (Italy), McEvoy Ranch (California), Olave (Chile), Terra Medi (Greece), Nicolas Alziari (France), and 34° (New Zealand). (For sources, see p. 76.)

How to taste olive oil:

Taste the extra-virgin olive oil alone, using shot glasses or disposable pill cups, and then on a piece of neutral-flavored bread. Cleanse your palate between samples by drinking cool (not cold) water and eating bread or crackers; some professional tasters use green-apple slices as well.

Tasting steps:

First, what color is the oil? Is it cloudy or clear?

Swirl it around in the glass, then hold the vessel up to your nose and inhale. Describe its aromas (for example, green apple or grass).

Take a sip and swirl it around in your mouth. Evaluate its flavor notes (for example, bitter, fruity, spicy, earthy) and body (for example, buttery, round, silky).

Swallow the oil and evaluate the finish—how long does it last?

Finally, ask everyone whether they enjoyed the oil. If desired, try the oil again, this time with bread.

Dina Cheney, author of the book Tasting Club, is a freelance food writer and cooking instructor. ♦



You'll feel like a brilliant pastry chef when you serve this apple jalousie.

A Sweet Treat That's Easy to Make

BY KIMBERLY Y. MASIBAY

The last time I visited Paris, all I really wanted to do was wander from one pastry shop to the next and feast on all things sweet and buttery. The way I saw it, it was now or never again—I doubted I had the skills (or the patience) to recreate any of those exquisite pastries in my own kitchen. But I was wrong.

Not so long ago, inspired by a persistent craving more than anything else, I decided to attempt one of my French pastry-shop favorites: a jalousie. Made with light, flaky puff pastry and any fruit your heart desires, a jalousie (zhah-loo-ZEE) is sort of like a strudel, sort of like a turnover, but with its slatted top crust, it's far more elegant.

It's also not nearly as difficult to make as I'd expected. The secrets are to use store-bought frozen puff pastry instead of trying to make your own and to precook the fruit filling so it doesn't sog out the crust. Using these tricks, I very quickly mastered the method and began turning out professional-looking pastries from my own home oven.

And you can do it, too—even if you've never made a pastry before. Simply make a fruit filling (I've provided an apple brown-butter filling and an easy mixed-berry variation), assemble the pastry (I show you how on the next page), and pop it into the oven. Voilà! You've made a classic French pastry as pretty and delicious as any you'd find in Paris.

Apple Brown-Butter Jalousie

Yields one 6x14-inch jalousie pastry; serves eight.

For this pastry, the fruit filling shouldn't be very juicy or the bottom crust will become soggy. The solution is to precook the apples and reduce their juices. The filling can be made and stored in a covered container in the refrigerator for up to 2 days.

1¼ to 1½ lb. Granny Smith apples (about 3 medium), peeled, halved lengthwise, cored, and sliced crosswise into ½-inch-thick slices
¼ cup packed light or dark brown sugar
3 Tbs. granulated sugar
1 tsp. fresh lemon juice
¾ tsp. ground cinnamon
¼ tsp. kosher salt
Pinch freshly grated or ground nutmeg
3 Tbs. unsalted butter
1 vanilla bean, split and seeds scraped out with the back of a knife
1 large egg
1 sheet frozen packaged puff pastry (Pepperidge Farm brand), thawed overnight in the fridge or according to package instructions
Flour for rolling out the dough
1 tsp. demerara, turbinado, or granulated sugar
Crème fraîche, lightly sweetened whipped cream, or vanilla ice cream for serving (optional)

Make the filling: In a large mixing bowl, toss together the apples, brown sugar, granulated sugar, lemon juice, cinnamon, salt, and nutmeg.

In a 12-inch skillet, melt the butter over medium heat until the milk solids turn golden brown, 1 to 2 minutes. Remove from the heat, add the vanilla seeds, and stir. Carefully add the apple mixture to the skillet; with a heatproof rubber spatula, scrape all the sugar and spices from the bowl into the skillet. Stir the apples to coat them with the butter and then spread them in a fairly even layer. Return the pan to medium heat and cook, stirring gently with the spatula every few minutes (try not to break the apple slices), until the apples are tender but not mushy (taste one) and still hold their shape, and the juices have cooked down to a fairly thick, brown, bubbling syrup, 10 to 13 minutes. Scrape the apples into a wide shallow dish or onto a baking sheet to cool completely before assembling the jalousie.

Assemble the jalousie: Follow steps 1 through 4 at right.

Bake the jalousie: Right before baking, brush the top of the jalousie with a very light coating of the remaining egg wash (you won't need it all) and sprinkle with the demerara, turbinado, or granulated sugar.

Bake for 15 minutes and then rotate the baking sheet. Continue baking until the pastry is puffed, deep golden brown on top, and light golden brown on the bottom—use a spatula to gently lift the jalousie so you can peek underneath—10 to 15 minutes more. Immediately transfer the jalousie from the baking sheet to a wire rack to cool for at least 45 minutes. (Instead of trying to move the hot jalousie with a spatula, lift the parchment paper to move the jalousie to the rack and then carefully slide the paper out from under the pastry.)

Serve the jalousie slightly warm or at room temperature with crème fraîche, lightly sweetened whipped cream, or vanilla ice cream, if you like. I prefer to eat it the day it's made, but the jalousie will keep, wrapped well in aluminum foil, for 3 days. You can reheat it in a 325°F oven for 5 minutes before serving.

How to assemble a



1

Line a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment.

In a small bowl, make an egg wash by beating the egg with 1 Tbs. water until well combined.

Unfold the puff pastry dough on a floured surface, and gently pinch together any seams that have split. With a floured rolling pin, roll the dough into a 12x14-inch rectangle. With a sharp knife, cut the rectangle in half lengthwise to form two 6x14-inch rectangles. Use a long spatula to help you move one of the dough rectangles onto the parchment-lined baking sheet.



A bumble-berry jalousie is even easier

Mixed-Berry Filling

Yields about 1¼ cups filling; enough for one jalousie.

To keep this filling from being overly juicy, I cook the berries to release their juices and then thicken them with cornstarch. You may refrigerate the filling in a covered container for 2 days before using.

14 oz. frozen mixed berries (a mix of blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, and blackberries)
¼ cup granulated sugar; more to taste
1 tsp. fresh lemon juice; more to taste
¼ tsp. finely grated lemon zest

beautiful jalousie



2

Use a pastry brush to brush a 1-inch border of egg wash around the perimeter of the dough. (Save the remaining egg wash.) Arrange the fruit in a 4-inch-wide strip down the length of the dough. (I like to shingle the apple slices in a thick herringbone pattern down the length of the dough; you may need to make a double layer of apples.) Some syrupy apple juices will likely remain in the dish; spoon 2 to 3 Tbs. over the apples. If some of the liquid seeps onto the egg-washed border, don't worry about it.



3

Lightly dust the remaining piece of puff pastry with flour and then gently fold it in half lengthwise; don't crease the fold. Using a sharp knife, cut 1 1/2-inch-long slashes at 1-inch intervals along the folded side of the dough; leave at least a 1-inch border on the remaining three sides. Do not unfold the dough. Using a long spatula, gently lift the folded strip and position it over the fruit-filled dough rectangle, matching up the straight edges.



4

Gently unfold the top piece of dough and stretch it over the filling, matching the straight edges all the way around the perimeter of the dough. Press the edges gently with your fingertips to seal the dough, and then, with a fork, very gently crimp the edges of the dough all the way around the pastry.

Chill the assembled jalousie for 15 to 20 minutes. Meanwhile, position a rack in the lower third of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F. Follow the baking instructions in the recipe at far left.

Generous pinch cinnamon
Pinch kosher salt
1 1/2 Tbs. cornstarch

In a medium (3 qt.) saucepan, stir together the frozen berries, sugar, lemon juice, lemon zest, cinnamon, and salt. Heat over medium-high until the berries start to release their juices and those juices bubble, 1 to 2 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium and simmer, stirring gently from time to time, until the berries release more juices and soften but still hold their shape for the most part (raspberries will probably break down, though, and blackberries might too), 7 to 9 minutes. Remove from the heat.

With a slotted spoon, scoop out the berries, letting as much juice as possible drain through the spoon, and put them into a small heat-proof bowl.

Dissolve the cornstarch in 3 Tbs. cold water. Whisk into the juices in the pan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Boil, stirring with a wooden spoon, until the mixture is very thick, a full 2 minutes. Scrape the sauce into the bowl with the berries. Fold them together. Taste. If too tart, add a little more sugar; if too sweet, add a little more lemon juice. Let the filling cool completely before using. Assemble the jalousie as directed above, spreading the filling evenly down the length of dough.

Kimberly Y. Masibay is senior editor at Fine Cooking. ♦

The Best Ragùs

The secret? Braise the meat on the bone first, then shred it, chop it, and mix it back into the rich sauce

BY BIBA CAGGIANO

Ragù is a legendary long-simmered meat sauce that, once upon a time, Italian mothers and grandmothers prepared ritually every Sunday, filling the house with rich, comforting aromas. Some of my favorite ragùs are the ones my mother-in-law, who was from the southern-Italian city of Salerno, and my Roman aunt used to make. Instead of simmering ground or chopped meat, as in traditional Bolognese ragù, they braised short ribs, baby back ribs, shanks, and other meats on the bone to create a thick, deeply flavored sauce. Then they shredded the cooked meat and added it back into the sauce before tossing it with pasta. It is these sumptuous ragùs that have inspired the sauces you'll find here.

While they share the same braising technique and a similar flavor foundation, each of these ragùs has a unique personality that comes both from the different types of meat I use and from a few other ingredients that help boost flavor. In the short rib ragù, for instance, I add dried porcini mushrooms to the braise because they lend a lusty earthiness, and I toss pancetta in with the aromatics for a little flavor punch. The baby back rib ragù (at right) benefits from the addition of sausage, which gives the sauce more depth

and complexity. And, borrowing from a traditional ragù made in the southern-Italian region of Abruzzi, I add bell peppers to my lamb shank ragù, because their sweetness provides a perfect counterpoint to the gaminess of the shanks.

When I'm ready to toss the ragù with pasta, I add a pat of butter and some grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, which help round out the flavors and give the sauce extra richness (see p. 60 for tips on the best pastas to use and how to combine them with the ragù).





baby back ribs and sausage
make a deeply satisfying sauce

Neapolitan Rib & Sausage Ragù (Ragù di Costicine e Salsiccia alla Napoletana)

Yields about 5 cups ragù.

- 2 28-oz. cans imported Italian plum tomatoes, preferably San Marzano**
- 2 lb. baby back pork ribs, trimmed of excessive fat (about 11 ribs)**
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped (about 1¼ cups)**
- 2 medium cloves garlic, finely chopped**
- 2 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**
- ½ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes; more to taste**
- 2 links mild Italian sausage (about ½ lb.), casings removed, meat broken into small pieces**
- 1 cup dry white wine**
- ½ cup tomato paste diluted in ½ cup water**

Position a rack in the lower third of the oven and heat the oven to 300°F.

Put one can of tomatoes and their juices in a food processor and process until puréed. Using a spatula or the back of a ladle, press the purée through a medium-mesh sieve set over a bowl to remove the seeds. Purée and strain the other can of tomatoes.

Cut the ribs into 2 or 3 pieces so they fit in a 7- to 8-qt. Dutch oven. Heat ¼ cup of the oil in the Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Season the ribs with kosher salt and pepper and add them to the hot oil, fatty side down. Cook until the ribs turn a light golden brown, propping them up as needed against the sides of the Dutch oven to brown them evenly, about 6 minutes. Turn the ribs over and brown them on the other side, about 2 minutes. Transfer the ribs to a large plate, discard the fat, and clean the pan with paper towels.

Heat the remaining ¼ cup oil in the pan over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic, parsley, and red pepper flakes and cook, stirring occasionally, until the

onion just begins to color, about 5 minutes. Add the sausage and cook, stirring and breaking up the sausage with a wooden spoon until it's lightly browned, 3 to 4 minutes.

Return the ribs to the pan and stir them around with the savory base. Raise the heat to high and add the wine. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the wine is reduced approximately by half, about 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes and the diluted tomato paste. Season with ½ tsp. salt and ¼ tsp. pepper. Stir until the liquid begins to simmer.

Turn off the heat, cover the pan tightly with a lid or heavy-duty aluminum foil, and put it in the oven. Simmer very gently, turning the ribs every half hour, until the sauce has a medium-thick consistency and the meat begins to fall off the bone, about 2½ hours.

Remove the pan from the oven and transfer the ribs and any meat that has fallen off the bone to a cutting board. Use a ladle to skim the fat off the surface of the sauce. When the ribs are cool enough to handle, pull the meat off the ribs. Discard the bones and any fat and connective tissue. Finely chop the meat. Stir the meat back into the sauce and simmer on the stovetop over medium heat, stirring occasionally, to allow the flavors to meld and the sauce to thicken slightly, about 10 minutes. Adjust the seasoning with salt, pepper, and crushed red pepper to taste.

To pair the ragù with pasta, see the box on p. 60.

wine choices

Look for a youthful, intensely fruity Zinfandel such as the 2004 Bogle "Old Vine" Zinfandel, California (\$14), or the 2004 Ravenswood "Zen of Zin" Zinfandel, California (\$18).

porcini and pancetta give
a boost to short rib ragù



The last step: Toss it with pasta

Once you've made your rich ragù, all that's left is to combine it with pasta. To serve four to six people, you'll need:

- 4 cups ragù
- 1 Tbs. unsalted butter
- 1 lb. dried or fresh pasta, cooked and drained
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano or Pecorino Romano

Heat the ragù (either in the Dutch oven you used to cook it or in a 12-inch skillet, if reheating) over medium-high heat. Add the butter and then pour in the pasta and Parmigiano or pecorino. Toss over medium-high heat until the pasta and sauce are well combined. Serve immediately.



Choosing the best pasta

Short, full-bodied dried pastas like rigatoni and orecchiette work great with these ragùs, because their nooks and ridges capture the sauce. If you want to use fresh pasta, a wide shape like pappardelle can stand up to a hearty sauce. And a ragù is a good excuse to cook gnocchi, too.

Short Rib & Porcini Mushroom Ragù (Ragù di Manzo e Funghi Porcini)

Yields about 8 cups ragù.

- 1 oz. dried porcini mushrooms (about 1 cup)
- 2 28-oz. cans imported Italian plum tomatoes, preferably San Marzano
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 lb. bone-in beef short ribs, trimmed of excess fat
- 1 lb. boneless beef chuck, trimmed of excess fat
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 small yellow onion, finely chopped (about 1 cup)
- 1 small carrot, finely chopped (about 1 cup)
- 1 small celery stalk, finely chopped (about ½ cup)
- 1 medium clove garlic, finely chopped
- 2 oz. thickly sliced pancetta, finely chopped
- 1 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 cup dry white wine

Position a rack in the lower third of the oven and heat the oven to 300°F.

Soak the mushrooms in 2 cups of warm water for 20 to 30 minutes. With a slotted spoon, transfer the mushrooms to a cutting board and chop them finely. Line a strainer with a coffee filter or two layers of paper towels and strain the mushroom-soaking water into a bowl to get rid of any grit. Set aside both mushrooms and liquid.

Put one can of tomatoes and their juices in a food processor and process until puréed. Using a spatula or the back of a ladle, press the purée through a medium-mesh sieve set over a bowl to remove the seeds. Purée and strain the other can of tomatoes.

Heat ¼ cup of the oil in a 7- to 8-qt. Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Season the ribs and beef chuck with kosher salt and pepper and add them to the hot oil. Cook, turning as necessary, until the meat is golden brown on all sides, about 10 minutes. Transfer to a large plate, discard the fat, and clean the pan with paper towels.

Heat the remaining ¼ cup oil in the pan over medium heat. Add the onion, carrot, celery, garlic, and pancetta and cook, stirring frequently, until the vegetables are lightly golden and soft, 7 to 8 minutes. Add the mushrooms and parsley and stir for about 1 minute to blend the ingredients.

Return the meat to the pan and stir to coat with the savory base. Raise the heat to high and add the wine. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the wine is reduced approximately by half, about 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes and ½ cup of the reserved mushroom-soaking water. Season with ½ tsp. salt and ¼ tsp. pepper. Stir until the liquid begins to simmer.

Turn off the heat, cover the pan tightly with a lid or heavy-duty aluminum foil, and put it in the oven. Cook, turning the meat every half hour, until the meat is fork tender and the ribs begin to fall off the bone, about 2½ hours.

Remove the pan from the oven and transfer the meat (including any that has fallen off the bone) to a cutting board. Use a ladle to skim the fat off the surface of the sauce. When the meat is cool enough to handle, pull the meat off the ribs. Discard the bones and any fat and connective tissue. Finely chop all the meat. Stir the meat back into the sauce and simmer on the stovetop over medium heat, stirring occasionally, to allow the flavors to meld and the sauce to thicken slightly, about 10 minutes. Adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper to taste.

To pair the ragù with pasta, see the box at left.

wine choices

The earthiness, intense fruit, and bright acidity of an Italian Barbera would be a good match for this ragù. Try the 2004 Michele Chiarlo Barbera d'Asti (\$14) or the 2004 Moccagatta Barbera d'Alba (\$19).

Lamb Shank & Sweet Pepper Ragù (Ragù di Stinco d'Agnello con Peperoni)

Yields 6 to 7 cups ragù.

1 28-oz. can imported Italian plum tomatoes, preferably San Marzano
4 lb. lamb shanks (about 2 large or 3 medium), trimmed of excess fat
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
½ cup all-purpose flour
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped (about 1½ cups)
2 medium cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 bay leaf
Pinch crushed red pepper flakes
2 medium red bell peppers, seeded and cut into small dice (about 2½ cups)
1 cup dry white wine
¾ to 1½ cups homemade or low-salt canned beef broth

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 300°F.

Put the can of tomatoes and their juices in a food processor and process until puréed. Using a spatula or the back of a ladle, press the purée through a medium-mesh sieve set over a bowl to remove the seeds.

Pat the lamb shanks dry with paper towels and season generously with salt and pepper. Spread the flour in a wide, shallow dish and dredge the shanks lightly in the flour.

Heat ¼ cup of the oil in a 7- to 8-qt. Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the shanks and cook, turning a few times, until they are golden brown on all sides, 8 to 10 minutes. Transfer the shanks to a large plate, discard the fat, and clean the pan with paper towels.

Heat the remaining ¼ cup oil in the pan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring frequently, until it's pale gold and soft, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic, bay leaf, and pepper flakes, stir for about 1 minute, and add the bell peppers. Cook, stirring frequently, until the peppers begin to color and soften a little, 4 to 5 minutes.

Return the shanks to the pan and stir them around with the pepper mixture. Increase the heat to high, add the wine, and stir until the wine is reduced approximately by half, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes, ¾ cup of broth, and ½ tsp. salt. Stir until the liquid begins to simmer.

Turn off the heat, cover the pan tightly with a lid or heavy-duty aluminum foil, and put it in the oven. Cook, turning the shanks every half hour or so, until the meat begins to fall off the bone, 2 to 2½ hours.

Remove the pan from the oven and transfer the shanks to a cutting board. When the shanks are cool enough to handle, pull the meat off the bones, discarding any fat and connective tissue. Cut the meat into bite-size pieces. Stir the meat into the sauce and bring it back to a gentle simmer. Cook, stirring a few times, until the sauce has a medium-thick consistency and a rich, reddish color, 5 to 10 minutes. If the sauce seems too dry, stir in some or all of the remaining broth. Discard the bay leaf, adjust the seasoning with salt, and turn off the heat.

To pair the ragù with pasta, see the box at far left.

wine choices

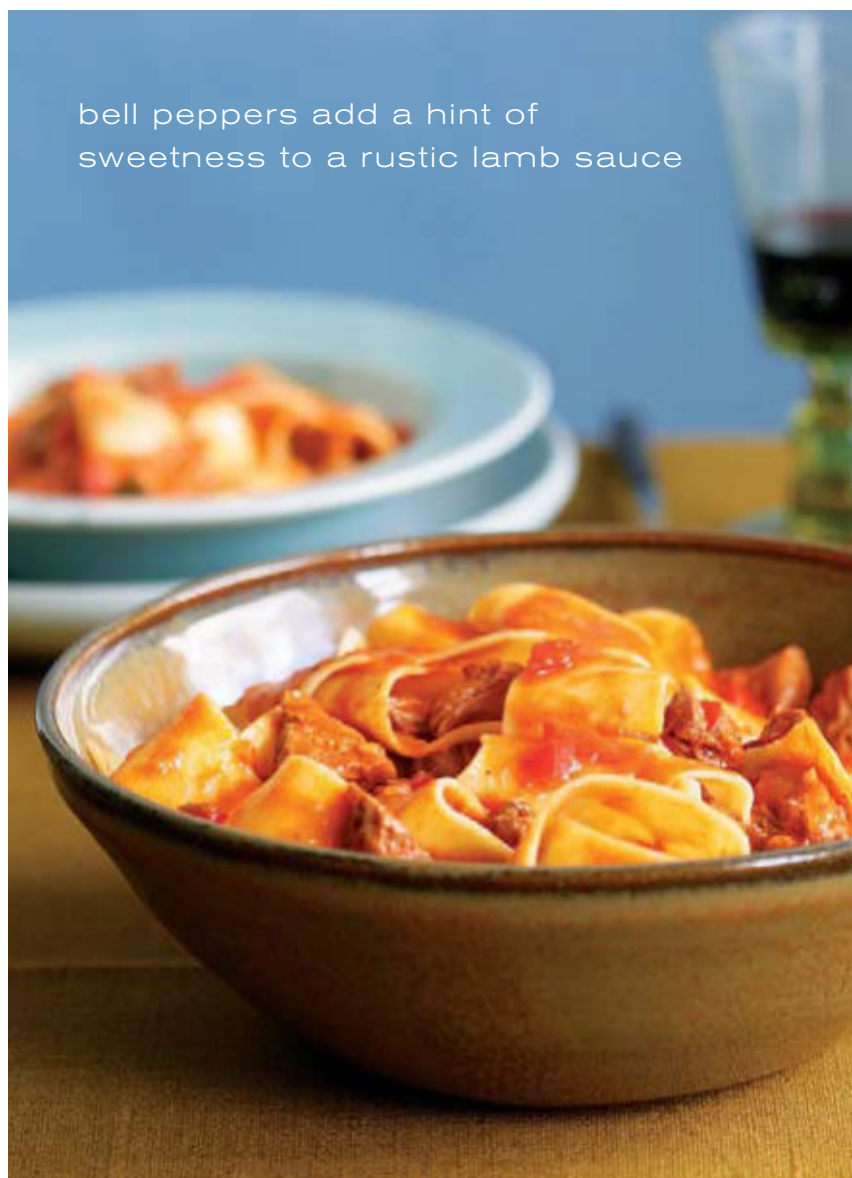
A Grenache blend would pair well with this braised lamb ragù. Try the 2004 Bonny Doon Clos de Gilroy (\$12) or the 2004 Domaine de la Maurelle Gigondas (\$18).

Biba Caggiano is the author of many cookbooks and the chef and owner of Biba Restaurant in Sacramento, California. Her latest book is Biba's Italy. ♦

Make it ahead

You'll probably have leftovers after the first meal, or you might want to make the whole dish ahead. These ragùs keep for up to 5 days in the fridge and up to 1 month in the freezer.

Here's what to do: Transfer the hot ragù to a large bowl and refrigerate it, uncovered, stirring well every 20 minutes until it's completely cool. Cover the bowl tightly with plastic and refrigerate it, or freeze the ragù in small containers or zip-top bags.



bell peppers add a hint of sweetness to a rustic lamb sauce

Versatile Frittata, for Breakfast, Lunch, or Dinner

Follow this method to make dozens of different frittatas with the ingredients you like best

BY JOYCE GOLDSTEIN

If you asked me to list my favorite dishes to make on a weeknight (or a weekend, for that matter), a frittata would certainly be at the top of the list. It's tasty, relatively quick, and incredibly versatile. It can be served warm, at room temperature, or even cold. Not only is it great for breakfast or brunch, but I also serve it with a tossed salad or soup for a satisfying lunch or supper. And when I cut it up in elegant little squares, it turns into a tasty hors d'oeuvre that's perfect for a slightly more formal occasion.

But the greatest thing about a frittata is that once you learn how to make it (see the simple method on pp. 64–65), you can customize it any way you like using your favorite ingredients. And if that weren't enough, it's really easy to make—certainly easier than its French cousin, the omelet. When you make a frittata, there's no fussy folding of the eggs over the filling and no risk of the dish falling apart in the process.

All my frittatas start out the same way: I loosely beat eggs with a little milk or cream and flour. The dairy provides a bit of extra moisture and richness and keeps the frittata light. The flour bolsters the eggs' setting and thickening properties and helps incorporate the added milk or cream.

Then, I add all the other ingredients into the bowl of beaten eggs. There are no hard-and-fast rules for what to put in your creation. Almost any type of vegetable works (see some of my favorites on p. 64) and, if you want to make it a little heartier, add bacon, pancetta, or sausage. Just think of what goes well together, and don't go crazy adding too

many things—a combination of three vegetables and meats is plenty. Frittatas are also a great way to use up leftovers, whether they're roasted or sautéed vegetables from yesterday's dinner or a link of sausage that's been lingering in the fridge. Just be sure to cut everything into small pieces.

Cheese and herbs are optional

You can't go wrong with adding cheese to eggs. Sharp cheeses, such as Parmigiano, pecorino, and feta deliver a pungent, pleasantly salty flavor. Goat cheese adds a nice creamy tang, while ricotta creates little pockets of moisture and sweetness. But you can skip cheese entirely and let the other ingredients shine. My favorite thing to add to frittatas is fresh herbs. I use them copiously because they lend a fresh, subtle flavor note (sometimes I'll even make an herb-only frittata that's wonderfully light and perfumey), but a frittata without herbs can be good, too.

Make sure your pan is hot but not too hot.

Before you pour in the egg mixture, your pan should be warm enough to set the frittata on the bottom but not so hot that the bottom will brown too quickly and become tough. That's why I heat the oil gently over medium heat and keep a close eye on the pan (you don't want the oil to start smoking).

Some people cook frittatas entirely on the stovetop, flipping them halfway through the cooking. But the flip can be tricky, so I finish my frittatas in the oven, instead. It's fool-proof and eliminates the risk factor. To promote faster and more even cooking, I start on the stovetop with the pan covered for the first 10 minutes or so to help the eggs set, then I uncover it and transfer it to the oven.

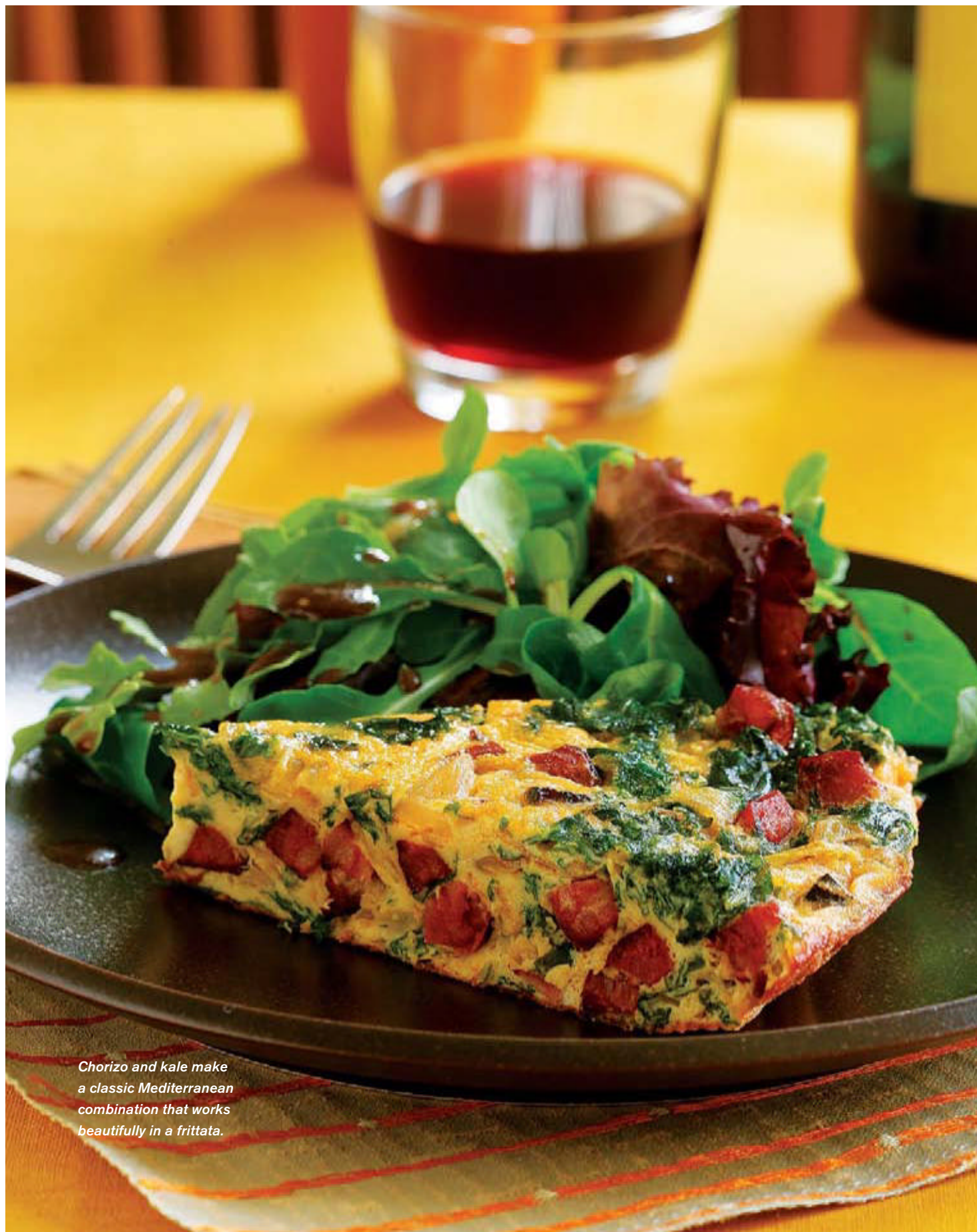
5 great combos

Make one of these tasty frittatas or create your own following the steps on pp. 64–65.

- ❖ Asparagus with mint, parsley, scallions, and a pinch of nutmeg
- ❖ Italian sweet sausage, mushrooms, and red onions with marjoram and pecorino
- ❖ Mushrooms and leeks with mint and goat cheese
- ❖ Potatoes, onions, and pancetta with basil and Parmigiano
- ❖ Kale, onions, and chorizo with Spanish paprika (pimentón)



For the perfect hors d'oeuvre, cut a frittata into 1- to 1½-inch squares.



Chorizo and kale make a classic Mediterranean combination that works beautifully in a frittata.

Four easy steps to a delicious frittata

Serves four to six as a main dish, eight to twelve as an appetizer.

1 Get ready

Read the method from start to finish and choose your ingredients from Steps 2 and 3. Cook any add-ins that need cooking. Heat the oven to 350°F.

Ingredients you'll need

8 large eggs
½ cup whole milk, half-and-half, or heavy cream
1 Tbs. all-purpose flour
1 to 1½ tsp. kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
Up to 3 vegetables & meats
(for a total of 2 cups)
1 or 2 fresh herbs (for a total of ¼ cup; optional)
1 or 2 aromatics & spices (optional)
1 or 2 cheeses (for a total of ½ cup; optional)
2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil; more as needed

2 Beat the eggs

In a bowl, lightly whisk 8 eggs with your choice of dairy from the list below, 1 Tbs. flour (don't worry if the flour forms small lumps), 1 to 1½ tsp. salt, and several grinds of pepper. **Note:** If using a salty cheese (such as pecorino or feta) or other salty ingredients (such as bacon or pancetta), use only 1 tsp. salt; otherwise, use 1½ tsp.



Dairy choices

Choose one, ½ cup

Milk

Half-and-half

Heavy cream

3 Stir in your add-ins

Combine your choice of add-ins from the lists at right with the egg mixture, folding them in gently. Allow any cooked ingredients to cool a bit before you add them to the eggs. They can be warm but not piping hot.



Vegetables & meat

Choose up to 3 in any combination, for a total of 2 cups

(The quantities given below all yield about 1 cup, unless otherwise noted.)

Asparagus — ½ to ⅔ lb., steamed, cut into 1½-inch pieces

Bell peppers — 1 lb. (about 2 large), roasted, peeled, cut into ¼-inch strips

Chorizo — ½ lb., cut into small dice, browned (yields about 1¼ cups)

Potatoes — 6 oz. (1 medium), peeled, boiled, cut into ¼-inch-thick slices

Fresh mushrooms — ½ lb., cut into ¼-inch-thick slices, sautéed

Hearty greens (such as collards or kale) — ½ lb., trimmed, cooked until tender in salted water, drained and squeezed to remove excess liquid, coarsely chopped

Italian Sausage — ½ lb., removed from its casing, crumbled, browned

Leeks — 2 medium (white and light green parts only), thinly sliced, sautéed

Onions — 1 large, thinly sliced, sautéed

Pancetta or bacon — ¼ lb., cut into ¼-inch dice, sautéed (yields ½ cup pancetta; ¼ cup bacon)

Spinach or Swiss chard — 1 lb., trimmed, sautéed, drained and squeezed to remove excess liquid, coarsely chopped

Zucchini — 6 to 7 oz. (about 1½ medium), cut into ¼-inch-thick slices, sautéed



Fresh herbs (optional)

Choose 1 or 2, for a total of ¼ cup

Basil — cut into thin strips

Chives — thinly sliced

Marjoram — chopped (use 1 Tbs. maximum)

Mint — cut into thin strips

Parsley — chopped

You can make a simple herb frittata using only fresh herbs and cheese. In this case, choose 3 herbs for a total of ½ cup.



Aromatics & spices (optional)

Choose 1 or 2

Crushed red pepper flakes — up to ½ tsp.

Garlic — minced, 1 tsp. (1 medium clove), sautéed

Lemon zest — finely grated, 1 tsp.

Nutmeg — finely grated or ground, a pinch

Scallions — thinly sliced, ¼ cup, sautéed

Spanish paprika (pimentón) — ½ tsp. added to any sautéed ingredients at the end of cooking



Cheeses (optional)

Choose 1 or 2, for a total of ½ cup

Feta — crumbled

Fontina — shredded

Fresh goat cheese — crumbled

Fresh ricotta — in dollops

Parmigiano-Reggiano — grated

Pecorino Romano — grated

4 Cook the frittata

Start on the stovetop. Heat 2 Tbs. olive oil in a 10-inch ovenproof anodized aluminum or nonstick skillet over medium heat. When the oil is hot, add the egg mixture, spreading everything evenly. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook until the eggs are set about 1 inch in from the sides of the pan, 8 to 12 minutes.

Transfer to the oven. Uncover the pan and finish the frittata in the oven until the top is puffed and completely set, 15 to 25 minutes longer.

Slide onto a cutting board. Remove from the oven and run a rubber spatula around the sides of the pan to loosen the frittata. Slip it out of the pan and

onto a cutting board. Let the frittata cool for 10 minutes before cutting and serving. Or let it cool completely to room temperature.



Joyce Goldstein, the former chef-owner of Square One, in San Francisco, teaches and writes about cooking. Her latest book is *Antipasti*. ♦



Pound Cake, Perfected

A few little tweaks make this classic butter cake moister, richer, and better than ever

Once upon a time, the recipe for pound cake was a simple ratio that everyone knew by heart: a pound of butter creamed with a pound of sugar, beaten with a pound of eggs, and finished with a pound of flour. Easy, yes, but a tender cake it does not make. I've discovered that most traditional pound cake recipes—and I've tried many—yield a cake that's both too sturdy and too dry for modern tastes.

My updated version tweaks the classic formula to produce a cake that's soft and moist yet still has the classic's buttery flavor and springy texture. Though I've strayed from the traditional ratio of ingredients, this modern pound cake is remarkably simple, and it remains true to my idea of what a pound cake should be—a moist, fluffy, buttery slice of heaven.

A few new ingredients

To start, I use more sugar than flour by weight. Sugar inhibits the development of gluten, the protein responsible for the structure of the cake. Less gluten means a moister and more tender crumb. Using too much egg adds a lot of structure-

forming proteins to the cake, which can make it seem hard and dry, so I reduce the number of eggs usually called for, substituting milk instead (the milk also makes the cake taste more buttery). Though I reduce the number of eggs overall, I keep the number of yolks high to preserve that rich, eggy flavor associated with pound cakes.

When I make this cake, I use cake flour because I like a light, tender crumb. I discovered, though, that with this particular recipe, all-purpose flour works wonderfully, too. This is unusual—generally, you'll run into trouble if you don't use cake flour in a recipe that calls for it. (For more information on using cake flour, see the sidebar on p. 69.)

Butter Pound Cake

Yields one 12-cup Bundt cake; serves twelve to sixteen.

10 oz. (1¼ cups) unsalted butter, softened at room temperature; more for the pan
10¼ oz. (2½ cups) cake flour or 11 oz. (2⅓ cups) unbleached all-purpose flour; more for the pan
1½ tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. table salt
1¾ cups granulated sugar
2 large egg yolks, at room temperature
3 large eggs, at room temperature

⅔ cup whole milk, at room temperature
1½ tsp. pure vanilla extract

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Butter a 12-cup Bundt pan, dust the pan with flour, and tap out the excess. In a small bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt until evenly combined.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the butter and the sugar at medium speed until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes.

On low speed, beat in the yolks until smooth. Stop the

mixer and scrape the bowl and the paddle. With the mixer running on medium-low speed, add the whole eggs, one at a time, mixing for at least 20 seconds after each addition. Stop the mixer and scrape the bowl and paddle again.

With the mixer running on the lowest speed, add half of the flour mixture and mix just to combine, add the milk and mix until combined, and then add the remaining flour mixture and mix just until combined.

Scrape the bowl one last time, add the vanilla extract, and mix at medium speed until

the batter is smooth and fluffy, 20 to 30 seconds.

Scrape the batter into the prepared pan and spread it evenly. Run a knife through the batter and tap the pan against the counter to dislodge trapped air. Bake until golden brown and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out with only moist crumbs clinging to it, 45 to 55 minutes.

Cool in the pan for 10 to 15 minutes and then invert onto a wire rack to cool completely. The cake will keep at room temperature for 3 days.



A new batter needs a new pan

Traditionally, pound cakes are baked in loaf pans, in which they rise slowly and form a high peak. My modern pound cake batter has more moisture and less protein structure than the original batter, so it will not rise as high or form that distinctive camel-back hump if baked in a loaf pan. To help the batter along, I bake it in a Bundt pan instead of a loaf pan. The Bundt shape gives the batter better support, and the hole in the center of the pan increases the total surface area that's exposed to heat, so the batter bakes more efficiently. This means the edges won't be dry by the time the center of the cake is set.

Three easy variations

Here are three flavor variations that are perfect for winter: Brandy & Rum Glazed, Lemon-Coconut, and Chocolate Chip. The first two of these cakes are glazed, which keeps them fresh longer and also gives them an extra boost of flavor. The third

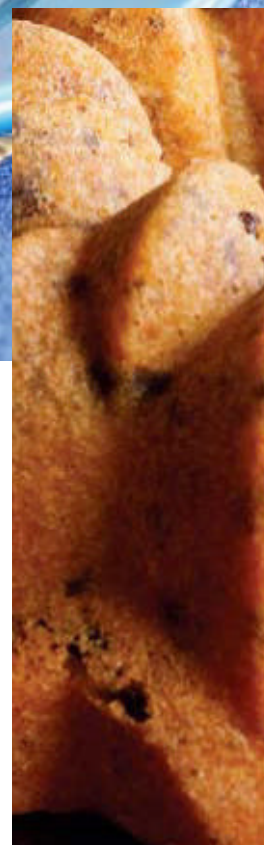
has finely chopped chocolate mixed into the batter, which adds real richness. Don't hesitate to experiment with other mix-ins. In summer, I like to add fresh blueberries to the batter, and in fall, I stir in chopped cranberries.



Brandy & Rum Glazed

Stir $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg into the completed batter. Then proceed with scraping it into the Bundt pan as directed on p. 67.

While the cake bakes, make a glaze by mixing $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups confectioners' sugar with 3 Tbs. brandy and 3 Tbs. rum until smooth. After the baked cake has cooled for 15 minutes, turn the warm cake onto a serving plate. Using a skewer, poke holes all over the cake. Brush the cake—every visible inch of it—with the glaze, until the glaze is gone. When the cake is completely cool, the glaze will form a protective crust over the cake, keeping it moist for 5 to 7 days.





Lemon-Coconut

Reduce the milk in the recipe to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup, and when you add it to the batter, add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh lemon juice as well. Then stir 1 Tbs. finely grated lemon zest and 1 cup loosely packed sweetened flaked coconut into the batter, breaking up any coconut lumps. Then proceed with scraping it into the Bundt pan as directed on p. 67.

While the cake bakes, make a glaze by mixing $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups confectioners' sugar with 6 Tbs. fresh lemon juice until smooth. After the baked cake has cooled for 15 minutes, turn the warm cake onto a serving plate. Using a skewer, poke holes all over the cake. Brush the cake—every visible inch of it—with the glaze, until the glaze is gone. When the cake is completely cool, the glaze will form a protective crust over the cake, keeping it moist for 5 to 7 days.



Chocolate Chip

Fold 4 oz. very finely chopped semisweet chocolate or $\frac{2}{3}$ cup mini semisweet chocolate chips into the completed batter. Then proceed with scraping it into the Bundt pan as directed on p. 67.

If desired, sprinkle the cake with confectioners' sugar before serving. The cake will keep at room temperature for 3 days.

food science

What a difference the flour makes



It's your choice. All-purpose flour makes a dense, moist pound cake, while cake flour delivers a taller, fluffier cake.

The flour you use can noticeably affect the appearance and texture of the finished cake. To see for yourself, try this tasty little experiment: Make one of my pound cakes with cake flour and another with all-purpose and compare them side by side. The cake-flour version rises higher in its pan as it bakes, so it's a taller cake with a fluffier texture. The cake made with all-purpose flour, on the other hand, is denser, moister, and closer to a quick bread in texture.

Cake flour really is different from other flours. It's specially milled and processed to have finer granules, lower protein, and higher starch. The flour is bleached, which weakens its gluten and makes baked goods more tender.

If you use cake flour, check the cake on the early side of the doneness window to prevent over-baking—cake flour has a lower pH, which can help the batter set faster.

Frequent Fine Cooking contributor Nicole Rees is a food scientist, cookbook author, and baker based in Portland, Oregon. ♦

Indian spices	70
How to shred cabbage	71
Cooking poultry safely	71
Perfect boiled eggs	71
Sherry vinegar	72
Creminis	73
Chopping sticky food	73
Greasing a Bundt pan	73
Following recipes	73

BY JENNIFER ARMENTROUT

New flavors from the Indian spice pantry

Curry leaves, fenugreek leaves, and the warming spice blend called garam masala are listed as optional ingredients in the Indian vegetable stir-fries on pp. 46–49, but they're

worth seeking out and getting to know because they add a special, authentic touch to each dish. If you don't have an Indian grocery store near you, see p. 76 for a mail-order source.

Curry leaves

These dark-green spear-shaped leaves are highly aromatic and pleasantly bitter. As the name suggests, they smell like curry, but they are not an ingredient in curry powder, which is a multispice blend. Indian cooks generally fry curry leaves in cooking oil (often with other spices) before adding other ingredients. They look a little like bay leaves, but unlike bay, curry leaves can be eaten.

Curry leaves are available both fresh and dried; fresh are more flavorful. The fresh leaves are usually sold on the stem—strip the leaves off to use them. Fresh curry leaves in a zip-top bag will keep for about two weeks in the refrigerator. They may also be frozen for up to three months, though they'll lose some potency.

Fenugreek leaves

Both the leaves and the seeds of the fenugreek (FEN-yoo-greek) plant are used in Indian cooking, but the recipes on pp. 46–49 call for just leaves, which are herbal and bitter. Fresh fenugreek leaves are eaten as a vegetable in India. The dried leaves, called *kasuri methi*, are used to flavor savory dishes, especially vegetables and curries.

Fresh leaves wrapped in dry paper towels in a zip-top bag will keep for about two weeks in the refrigerator. Store dried leaves in a sealed jar in a cool, dark cupboard; use within four months.

Garam masala Yields about ¾ cup

Garam masala, which means hot spice, is the Indian equivalent of the French *herbes de Provence* or the Chinese five-spice powder. The recipe changes from region to region in northern India, with each household adding its own touch. As a rule, garam masala is added at the last step of cooking, almost like a fresh herb. If cooked too long, it tends to become bitter.

Garam masala is available on some grocery store spice racks as well as in Indian markets, but for the best flavor, toast and grind your own.

- 1 cinnamon stick (2½ to 3 inches long), broken into pieces**
- 2 bay leaves**
- ¼ cup cumin seeds**
- ⅓ cup coriander seeds**
- 1 Tbs. green cardamom pods**
- 1 Tbs. whole black peppercorns**
- 2 tsp. whole cloves**
- 1 small dried red chile, stemmed**
- ¼ tsp. nutmeg (preferably freshly grated)**
- ⅛ tsp. ground mace**

Heat the cinnamon, bay leaves, cumin seeds, coriander seeds, cardamom pods,

peppercorns, cloves, and chile in a medium skillet over medium-high heat, stirring often, until the cumin seeds darken to a deep, toasty brown color, 2 to 3 minutes—the spices may crackle and smoke a bit. Immediately transfer to a plate or bowl to cool. Add the nutmeg and mace, and grind the spices in a spice grinder to a fine powder, working in batches if necessary. Store in an airtight container for up to 4 months.

—*Suvir Saran is the author of Indian Home Cooking.*



Shredding cabbage

Whether you're preparing cabbage for a sauté, a salad, or a soup, more often than not you'll be shredding it. For large quantities, use a food processor fitted with a slicing blade, but for small amounts, it's quick to shred by hand.

Quarter and core the head of cabbage. Thinly slice each quarter crosswise, keeping the fingertips of your guiding hand curled under so you don't cut them. If the quarter gets too awkward to hold, flip it onto another side and finish slicing.



food safety update

A new doneness temperature for poultry

We aim for juicy white meat in our poultry recipes. That's why we've always advised you to cook poultry to a temperature of 165° to 170°F, even though the USDA recommended 180°F.

If the discrepancy ever made you uneasy, you can now relax. The USDA recently lowered the safe cooking temperature for all poultry to 165°F. At this temperature, salmonella and other pathogens will be destroyed,

and the meat will be safe to eat and definitely juicy, but it may still have a pink tinge. If that's not to your liking, you might want to cook the meat to a slightly higher temperature.

As always, the best way to check the temperature is to insert an instant-read thermometer into the thickest part of the thigh.

—Kimberly Y. Masibay,
senior editor

How to boil an egg perfectly every time

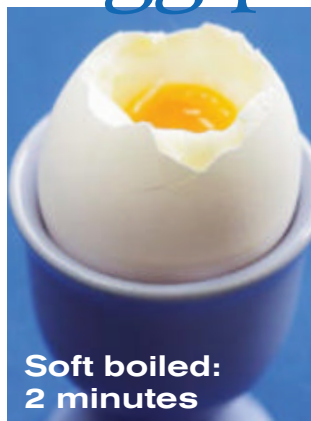
Boiling an egg may not be rocket science, but timing is important. Here are some guidelines.

Getting started

Put the eggs in a saucepan and add enough cold water to cover them by about 1 inch. Set the pan over medium-high heat and as soon as the water reaches a brisk simmer, start timing. As the eggs cook, adjust the heat as needed to maintain a brisk simmer. (Though we talk about hard-boiled eggs—and we're using that term here—the fact is that cooking eggs in boiling water cracks the shell and makes the eggs tough and rubbery. A simmer works much better.)

Peeling eggs

When the eggs are cooked, carefully pour out most of the hot water, leaving the eggs in the pan. Set the pan in the sink under cool running water for a few minutes until the eggs are barely warm. If the shells are stubborn, try peeling them under running water. The fresher the egg, the more attached the shell, so for boiling, older eggs are preferable.



Soft boiled:
2 minutes

The white is solid, but the yolk is still runny. Serve in an egg cup for breakfast. Use the side of a small spoon to crack and remove the pointed end of the egg, making a hole in the shell large enough to fit the spoon. Or use egg scissors, if you have them.



Medium boiled:
4½ minutes

The yolk is solid but still dark orange-yellow, moist, and dense in the middle. Beautiful and delicious quartered on a salad.



Hard boiled:
8 minutes

The yolk is completely solid, light yellow, and crumbly, with no sign of the telltale green or gray ring around the yolk that's caused by overcooking. Perfect for egg salad or deviled eggs.

The boil-and-walk-away method

For another way to hard-boil eggs, begin as directed at left with the eggs in cold water, but once the water reaches a brisk simmer, turn off the heat and let the eggs sit uncovered in the hot water for at least 10 minutes and up to 30 minutes—the water cools gradually, preventing the eggs from overcooking. This is a great method when you're multitasking and can't pay careful attention to the eggs.

—Allison Ehri, test kitchen associate

ingredient profile

Sherry Vinegar

A long-time favorite of ours, Spanish sherry vinegar has been hovering in the wings of the world culinary stage for years, and we're wagering that it'll soon become as familiar as Italian balsamic vinegar, which was practically unknown in North America not so long ago.

What it is:

Sherry vinegar is made from sherry wine, which is produced in the Jerez (Xérès or Sherry) denomination of origin in southwestern Spain. The unusual thing about the vinegar (and the wine) is that it's blended and aged using a special *solera* system. Imagine a pyramid of wooden barrels, each one containing vinegar. The bottom row of barrels (the *solera* level) holds the oldest vinegar; the top row holds the youngest. When the *solera* vinegar is ready for bottling, only a third of the vinegar from each barrel is drained and bottled, and then the void is filled with younger vinegar from the next row up, which is then replenished from the third row up, and so on. In this fashion, the younger vinegar picks up the characteristics of the older vinegar: complex, harmonious, deep, rich, nutty, slightly sweet, and very sharp.

Where to find it:

Look for sherry vinegar in gourmet shops and high-end supermarkets, as well as some large chain supermarkets. As this vinegar

becomes more popular, it should begin to show up in smaller chain and independent markets. If you don't see it, ask the store manager about carrying it, and in the meantime, see p. 76 for a mail-order source.

When buying sherry vinegar, look on the label for the symbol shown at right to verify that the vinegar was produced by registered bodegas (cellars) in the Jerez denomination of origin. There are two types of sherry vinegar: *vinagre de Jerez*, which is aged at least six months, and *vinagre de Jerez reserva*, which must be aged for at least two years but is often aged much longer, sometimes as many as 30 years.



How to use it:

Use sherry vinegar as you would any other wine vinegar. Add a splash to sautéed vegetables, soups (particularly gazpacho), stews, and sauces to brighten them and give them that certain something. Use it in a marinade or vinaigrette (like the one below), try it in a homemade mayonnaise, or turn it into a brine for pickling vegetables.



Honey-Mustard Sherry Vinaigrette

Yields about 1/4 cup dressing, enough to dress a salad for four people; recipe may be doubled.

This subtly sweet vinaigrette is terrific with any combination of salad greens and vegetables, but I especially like it on a very simple salad of Boston lettuce and toasted sliced almonds.

- 4 tsp. sherry vinegar; more to taste**
- 1 tsp. honey**
- 1/2 tsp. Dijon mustard**
- 1/4 tsp. finely chopped fresh thyme (optional)**
- 1/8 tsp. kosher salt**

- Pinch freshly ground black pepper**
- 3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**

In a small bowl, whisk together the vinegar, honey, mustard, thyme (if using), salt, and pepper. Slowly add the olive oil, whisking constantly and vigorously as you go.

Alternatively, combine all the ingredients in a small jar, such as an empty mustard jar, close the lid tightly, and shake like crazy until well combined.

Taste and add a little more vinegar if you prefer a sharper vinaigrette.

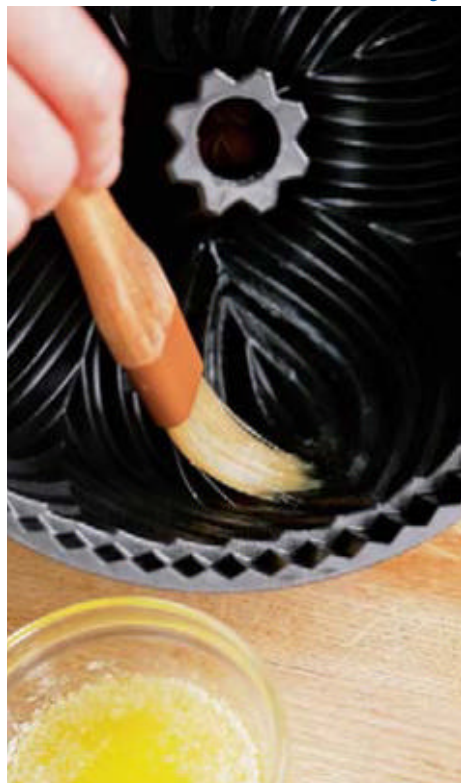


A cremini one day, a portabella the next

You might be surprised to learn that creminis and portabellas are the same variety of mushroom—they look pretty different, after all. The cremini is actually an immature portabella, and that's why creminis are sometimes marketed as “baby bellas.” It takes only two or three days for a cremini to blossom into a portabella.

Although they're botanically the same, they don't have the same flavor. The cremini tastes like a more flavorful version of its cousin, the white button, and the two can be used interchangeably. The portabella has a deeper, more robust flavor and a meaty texture.

A better way to grease a Bundt pan



Fancy fluted tube pans, popularly called Bundt pans, turn out gorgeous cakes—as long as the cake doesn't stick to the pan, that is. To make sure your Bundt cakes never stick, try greasing the pan with melted butter and a pastry brush instead of softened butter. The pastry brush lets you get the butter down into the crevices of the pan. Softened butter, on the other hand, tends to coat these pans unevenly—thickly in some spots and missing others entirely. For extra anti-stick insurance, flour the pan after buttering it.

Chopping sticky stuff

Crystallized ginger and dried fruit like apricots and figs can be frustrating to chop—as soon as you cut into these sticky-on-the-inside ingredients, they tend to mass together and cling to your knife like glue. Here are a few tips to make the chopping go more smoothly:

Make your knife nonstick. Coat the knife with a light film of vegetable oil or cooking spray.

Chop only small amounts at a time.

Things will be less likely to clump together.

Dice rather than chop. Cut the ingredient lengthwise into thin strips and then cut across the strips into fine dice—you'll get less clumping and sticking than if you chop willy-nilly.



Trust your senses

In the *Fine Cooking* test kitchen, one of our main goals is to pack our recipes with as much detail as we can to help you get the same results we do. The catch is that everyone has different stoves and ovens and cookware—and ingredients differ, too. That's why, in addition to giving cooking times, almost every step in our recipes has a sensory clue that tells you what should happen. So when you follow one of our recipes, treat the time ranges as an estimate and pay more attention to phrases like “toast the spices until the seeds pop” or “simmer until the potatoes are tender.”

Trust your instincts, too. If a recipe says to cook something over medium-high heat until golden brown, but the food seems to be burning rather than browning, your stove is probably hotter than ours or your cookware isn't as heavy-duty. Go ahead and follow your instinct to turn down the heat a bit. ♦

Rating Prepared Basil Pesto

BY LAURA GIANNATEMPO

Although fresh basil is in short supply at this time of year, I still crave the vibrant flavors of homemade pesto once in a while. So what's a pesto lover to do? It's tempting to reach for a container of prepared pesto. But is it any good? To find out, we invited 10 *Fine Cooking* staffers to a blind tasting of widely available prepared pestos, both in jars and in small tubs (these are found in the refrigerated section of supermarkets).

One thing was immediately clear: We didn't like any of the jarred pestos and wouldn't recommend using them. Most tasted overly acidic and processed, and many contained citric acid and other added preservatives. And the basil was, well—where was the basil? Instead of its bright, fresh flavor, we got a lot of brininess, too much salt, or too much cheese.

The fresher varieties we tasted (ranked here) fared much better. Overall, they had a creamier texture and a sweeter, more pleasant flavor than the jarred pestos. In a pinch, we'd toss them with pasta or add them to a dressing on a busy weeknight. But even these weren't in the same league as the homemade stuff. Capturing those bright summer flavors is harder than we thought. ♦

Top
pick



TRADER JOE'S
\$2.99 (7 ounces)

Trader Joe's pesto, labeled Trader Giotto, was our hands-down favorite. We found that its bright, sweet basil flavor with a good balance of garlic, cheese, and nuts came the closest to homemade. Some tasters weren't crazy about its chunky texture, with big pieces of pine nuts and garlic floating in oil, but overall, it was the best of the bunch.

Runners-up Fresh pestos are numbered in order of preference; prices will vary.



2
CIBO NATURALS
\$5.99 (6 ounces)

This pesto (available at Whole Foods and other select grocery stores) had an appealing creamy texture and a decent fresh basil flavor. It did have a shortcoming, though: a slightly bitter aftertaste, which grew more pronounced with every bite.



3
BUITONI
\$3.79 (7 ounces)

Tasters were divided on Buitoni's widely available pesto: Some liked its smooth, paste-like texture and pleasantly pungent flavor. Others thought it was too gummy, a bit salty, and heavy on the cheese.



4
BEAR POND FARM
\$6.19 (6.3 ounces)

This herby pesto made with organic basil was a tad too garlicky for most tasters. It also contained oregano, which muddled the basil flavor a bit. We didn't love its dense, pasty texture, but we thought it might work tossed with pasta and diluted with a little cooking water. (Bear Pond Farm is available only in the Northeast and in some midwestern cities.)

We also tasted Amore's tubed pesto and the following jarred pestos (in alphabetical order): Alessi, Bertolli, Candoni, Classico, DeCecco, Racconto, Roland, Saclà.



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Roast Chicken, p. 38

Roasting two chickens requires a large, heavy-duty roasting pan. A few that we like are KitchenAid's (\$149 at ShopKitchenAid.com; 800-541-6390), Mauviel Cook Style's (\$199.95 at Cooking.com; 800-663-8810), and Viking's (\$274.95 at ChefsResource.com; 866-765-2433).

You'll also need a large roasting rack that will hold both birds. If you don't have one, try Calphalon's large rack (15x10½ inches) for \$12.63 at Amazon.com.

Meat Ragù, p. 58

A 7- to 8-quart Dutch oven is ideal for the meat ragù. We like Staub and Le Creuset brands, both available at ChefsResource.com (866-765-2433). Look for San Marzano canned tomatoes in some supermarkets, specialty shops, or for \$4.50 per 28-ounce can at CyberCucina.com (800-796-0116).

Pound Cake, p. 66

You'll find an assortment of 12-cup Bundt pans (also known as "bundform" pans) at both Nordicware.com (877-466-7342) and KaiserBakeware.com (800-966-3009).

Jalousie Pastry, p. 55

A giant spatula makes it easier to move the puff pastry rectangles from the counter-top to the baking sheet. Look for one at BakersCatalogue.com (800-827-6836), where they're \$19.95. Vanilla beans are usually available in supermarkets, but if you'd like to mail order them, visit Penzeys.com (800-741-7787); prices start at \$6.29 for three beans.

Indian Vegetable Stir-Fries, p. 46

Most of the spices that Suvir Saran recommends are available in well-stocked supermarkets. However, if you're looking for dried or fresh fenugreek or curry leaves, you may need to visit or order from an Indian grocery. Suvir's favorite mail-order source for these items is Foods of India (212-683-4419). You'll also find dried and fresh fenugreek and dried curry leaves at Kalustyans.com (800-352-3451). Suvir likes to use Emile Henry's 3.25-quart black flameproof ceramic brazier pan for these stir-fries (\$124.95 at Cooking.com).

Artisan Foods, p. 24

To order the sea-salt caramels from Little Flower Candy Company or for more information, visit LittleFlowerCandyCo.com or call 323-551-5948.



From Our Test Kitchen, p. 70

Look for good-quality sherry vinegar in a range of prices at Zingermans.com (888-636-8162) or Tienda.com (800-710-4304). Despaña Brand Foods carries three brands at their stores in Jackson Heights, Queens, New York (718-779-4971) and in Soho, New York (212-219-5050).

For information on fenugreek and curry leaves, see the source under Indian Vegetable Stir-Fries at left.





Tasting Party, p. 50

Dina Cheney recommends the following products for a tasting party:

Extra-virgin olive oil

- ❖ 34° New Zealand reserve extra-virgin olive oil, 375 ml for \$26.51 at 1800gourmet.com (800-468-7638).
- ❖ Lucini Premium extra-virgin olive oil is available in supermarkets (500 ml bottle for \$11.99 to \$14.99), or for other sources, visit Lucini.com (888-558-2464).
- ❖ McEvoy Ranch extra-virgin olive oil, 375 ml for \$20 at McEvoyRanch.com (866-617-6779).
- ❖ Nicholas Alziari extra-virgin olive oil, 1 liter for \$36.99 at Citarella.com (212-874-0383).
- ❖ Olave extra-virgin olive oil, 500 ml for \$25 at Zingermans.com (888-636-8162).
- ❖ Terra Medi extra-virgin olive oil, 17 oz. for \$12.95 at CrateAndBarrel.com (800-967-6696).

You'll find more olive oils at lgourmet.com (877-446-8763), DeanAndDeLuca.com (800-221-7714), and ChefShop.com.

Cheddar cheese

- ❖ Cabot Private Stock Cheddar, 8 ounces for \$4.75 at ShopCabot.com (888-792-2268). It's also available in supermarkets.
- ❖ Fiscalini Bandaged Cheddar, 1 pound for \$18 to \$24 at FiscaliniCheese.com (800-610-3276).
- ❖ Grafton Village 2-year Extra-Aged Cheddar, two 1-pound bricks for \$17 at GraftonVillageCheese.com (800-472-3866).

- ❖ Keen's Cheddar, 1 pound for \$24.99 at DiBruno.com (888-322-4337).
- ❖ Montgomery's Cheddar, 1 pound for \$30.50 at ArtisanalCheese.com (877-797-1200).
- ❖ Tillamook Sharp Cheddar is available in supermarkets; for a source near you, visit TillamookCheese.com.

For more cheese sources, try MurraysCheese.com (888-692-4339) and Cheese.com.

Dark chocolate

- ❖ Ghirardelli 100% cacao unsweetened baking bars are available in supermarkets; for more information on store locations, visit Ghirardelli.com.
- ❖ Rapunzel 85% organic semi-sweet chocolate, \$3.69 per bar at EFoodPantry.com (866-372-6879).
- ❖ Santander 53% semisweet chocolate, \$1.80 per bar, and Scharffen Berger 70% bitter-sweet chocolate, \$4.15 per bar, at Chocosphere.com (877-992-4626).
- ❖ Chocolove 55% pure dark chocolate, \$2.99 per bar, and Valrhona 85% dark chocolate, \$4.49 per bar, at WorldwideChocolate.com (800-664-9410).

ChocolateSource.com (800-214-4926) also has a vast selection of good-quality chocolates. ♦

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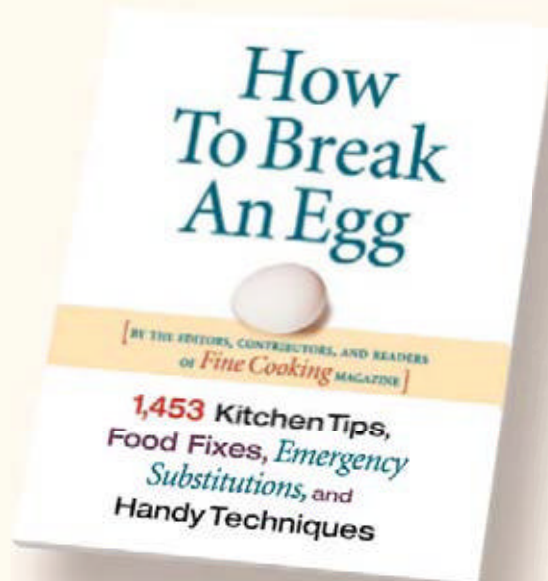
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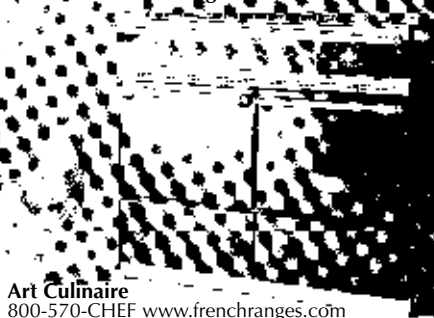
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nutritioninformation

Recipe	Page	Calories		Protein	Carb	Fats (g)				Chol.	Sodium	Fiber	Notes
		total	from fat	(g)	(g)	total	sat	mono	poly	(mg)	(mg)	(g)	
Letters	10												
Tuscan Peasant Soup with Rosemary & Pancetta		370	160	17	37	18	4.5	10	2	20	1010	8	based on 8 servings
In Season	20												
Browned Cauliflower with Anchovies, Olives & Capers		340	210	23	9	24	4	15	3.5	55	2810	4	based on 4 servings
Roast Chicken	38												
Roast Chicken with Rosemary-Lemon Salt		570	310	59	0	35	12	13	7	205	1160	0	based on 8 servings
Coconut Rice with Chicken & Snow Peas		660	360	34	39	40	14	15	8	100	1300	3	based on 4 servings
Soft Chicken Tacos with the Works		510	250	29	40	28	7	15	4.5	75	1010	9	based on 6 servings
Lemony Chicken Caesar Salad with Garlic Toasts		490	310	20	26	35	8	20	4	60	750	2	based on 6 servings
Crispy Potatoes	44												
Crispy Smashed Roasted Potatoes		270	180	2	20	20	3	15	2	0	520	2	based on 4 servings
Indian Stir-Fries	46												
Cabbage & Carrot Stir-Fry with Toasted Cumin & Lime		80	45	2	10	5	0	3	1.5	0	510	3	based on 6 servings
Mushroom Stir-Fry with Onions & Tomatoes		140	70	5	16	8	0.5	4.5	2.5	0	390	4	based on 6 servings
Potato Stir-Fry with Mint & Cilantro		220	70	4	35	8	0.5	4.5	2.5	0	390	5	based on 6 servings
Green Bean Stir-Fry with Shredded Coconut		190	140	4	12	16	6	6	3	0	290	6	based on 6 servings
Jalousie Pastry	55												
Apple Brown-Butter Jalousie		250	120	3	30	13	5	6	1	25	190	1	based on 8 servings
Mixed-Berry Jalousie		190	80	3	24	9	2.5	4.5	1	15	170	2	based on 8 servings
Ragùs	58												
Neapolitan Rib & Sausage Ragù		350	230	16	9	26	7	15	2.5	50	530	2	per ½ cup serving
Short Rib & Porcini Mushroom Ragù		190	100	12	5	11	3	6	1	35	320	1	per ½ cup serving
Lamb Shank & Sweet Pepper Ragù		230	130	13	6	15	3.5	9	1.5	45	290	1	per ½ cup serving
Frittatas	62												
Frittata with Asparagus, Herbs & Scallions		130	70	10	5	7	2.5	2.5	1	285	390	1	based on 6 servings
Frittata with Kale, Onions & Chorizo		240	140	16	6	17	6	7	2	305	700	1	based on 6 servings
Frittata with Mushrooms, Leeks & Goat Cheese		190	100	14	8	11	5	3.5	1	295	450	1	based on 6 servings
Frittata with Potatoes, Onions & Pancetta		190	110	12	8	12	4	4.5	1.5	295	540	1	based on 6 servings
Frittata with Sausage, Mushrooms & Onions		200	120	14	6	13	5	4	1.5	300	560	1	based on 6 servings
Pound Cake	66												
Butter Pound Cake		310	140	3	37	16	10	4.5	1	105	130	0	based on 16 servings
Brandy & Rum Glazed Pound Cake		350	150	3	46	16	10	4.5	1	105	130	0	based on 16 servings
Lemon-Coconut Pound Cake		360	160	4	49	18	11	4.5	1	105	140	1	based on 16 servings
Chocolate Chip Pound Cake		340	160	4	41	18	11	4.5	1	105	130	1	based on 16 servings
Test Kitchen	70												
Honey-Mustard Sherry Vinaigrette		100	90	0	2	10	1.5	7	1	0	50	0	based on 4 servings
Quick & Delicious	82a												
Linguine with Shrimp & Chorizo		570	180	34	63	20	5	10	2.5	170	940	4	based on 6 servings
Curried Lentil Soup		330	100	19	43	11	6	3	1	25	320	14	based on 4 servings
Smoky Eggplant & White Bean Dip with Pita Crisps		270	130	7	31	15	2	9	3	0	430	8	based on 6 servings
Buttermilk Country Fried Chicken with Cucumber Salad		320	120	37	10	14	2	7	3.5	95	960	1	based on 2 servings
Steak, Egg & Blue Cheese Salad		600	420	37	7	48	12	28	4.5	285	1130	2	based on 4 servings
Seared Tuna with Fennel Seeds & Caper Brown Butter		600	290	72	2	33	16	10	5	220	400	1	based on 4 servings
Chinese Five-Spice-Crusted Duck Breasts		260	130	31	1	14	3.5	7	2	175	320	0	based on 4 servings
Back Cover													
Stir-Fried Cauliflower with Green Peas & Ginger		160	70	7	20	8	0.5	4	2.5	0	470	9	based on 6 servings

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at Nutritional Solutions in Melville, New York. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in the

calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used. When the

quantities of salt and pepper aren't specified, the analysis is based on ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for entrées, and ⅛ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for side dishes.

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An Indian twist on a cauliflower sauté

Sometimes a little spice is all you need to liven up weeknight side dishes. Ginger and chiles give this quick stir-fry a jolt of heat, making it great paired with plain yogurt, alongside roasted chicken or pan-seared lamb chops.



Some like it hot (and some maybe not)

You can dial down the heat in this dish in two ways: by omitting the spicy dried red chiles entirely and by removing the ribs and seeds from the jalapeño. Use a small spoon to scoop out both seeds and ribs in one quick swipe and give the chile a quick rinse before chopping it.

For more Indian vegetable stir-fry recipes, turn to p. 46.

Stir-Fried Cauliflower with Green Peas & Ginger

Serves six.

Freshly ground coriander seeds have a beautiful citrusy essence and really make a difference in this dish. Grind the whole seeds in a spice grinder or mortar and pestle right before cooking. Pre-ground coriander works here but will be far less aromatic, especially if it's more than a few months old.

- 3 Tbs. canola oil**
- ¼ cup dried fenugreek leaves or ½ cup fresh fenugreek leaves, chopped (optional); see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 70**
- 1 to 3 small dried whole red chiles (optional)**
- 1 Tbs. ground coriander, preferably freshly ground**
- 1 tsp. cumin seeds**
- 3 Tbs. minced fresh ginger**
- 1 medium jalapeño (seeds and ribs removed if you prefer a milder flavor), finely chopped**
- 2½- to 3-lb. head cauliflower, cored and cut into medium florets 1 to 1½ inches wide and 1½ inches long (6 to 8 heaping cups)**
- 2 cups (about 10 oz.) frozen green peas (do not thaw)**
- 2 tsp. kosher salt; more to taste**
- ¼ tsp. homemade or store-bought garam masala (optional); see p. 70**

Heat the oil with the fenugreek leaves, chiles (if using), coriander, and cumin seeds in a large wok or 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the cumin browns and becomes fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the ginger and jalapeño and cook, stirring and scraping the bottom of the pan to prevent the ginger from burning, until the ginger is fragrant and sizzling, 30 seconds to 1 minute.

Add the cauliflower and stir to coat with the spices. Cover and reduce the heat to medium. Cook for 5 minutes and then stir in the frozen peas and salt. Cover and cook until the cauliflower is tender and the peas are very tender, 5 to 8 minutes more. Uncover the pan, increase the heat to high and cook, stirring occasionally, for 2 minutes. Add the garam masala (if using) and, if necessary, cook until any remaining liquid in the pan evaporates, 1 to 2 minutes longer. Taste and add more salt if needed before serving.

Suvir Saran is the executive chef of Dévi in New York City and Veda in New Delhi and the author of Indian Home Cooking. ♦

BY ALLISON EHRI

I keep an eclectic assortment of easy recipes tucked up my sleeve so that I can

cook up something delicious for anyone who drops by, be it my vegetarian friends or my meat-and-potatoes father. These dishes are versatile: fast enough to pull together on a weeknight but special enough to serve for a planned—or improvised—dinner party. To put some of these dishes together into an entertaining menu, try serving the eggplant and white bean dip as an appetizer, the curried lentil soup as a starter, and the tuna or the duck as an entrée.



cover recipe

Linguine with Shrimp & Chorizo

Serves four to six.

Kosher salt
2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil;
more as needed
6 oz. chorizo, sliced 1/8 inch
thick (1 1/3 cups)
1 lb. large shrimp (31 to
40 count), peeled and
deveined
1 small onion, finely diced
4 medium cloves garlic, thinly
sliced
1 26-oz. box Pomi brand
chopped tomatoes (or
2 14-oz. cans petite-cut
diced tomatoes)
1/4 to 1/2 tsp. crushed red
pepper flakes
1 lb. dried thin linguine
1/4 cup roughly chopped fresh
flat-leaf parsley

Bring a pot of generously salted water to a boil. Heat the olive oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Cook the chorizo, stirring occasionally, until browned, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the shrimp and cook, stirring occasionally, until it curls up and just begins to turn pink, about 2 minutes; don't cook it through. Off the heat, use a slotted spoon to transfer the chorizo and shrimp to a bowl.

Pour off all but 2 Tbs. of the fat from the skillet (or add more oil so you have 2 Tbs. fat in the pan) and set the skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook until softened, about 3 minutes. Stir in the tomatoes with their juices and the pepper flakes, scraping the bottom of the pan, and simmer briskly for 5 minutes to blend the flavors.

Meanwhile, cook the linguine in the boiling water until barely al dente, 4 to 6 minutes. Reserve 1/2 cup of the pasta water and drain the pasta in a colander.

Add the shrimp and chorizo to the sauce and simmer until the shrimp is just cooked through, another 1 to 2 minutes. Season the sauce to taste with salt. Toss the pasta, sauce, and parsley in the pasta pot over medium-low heat for 2 minutes. The sauce should just coat the pasta; add some of the pasta water to moisten if necessary. Drizzle each serving with a little oil.



Curried Lentil Soup

*Yields about 1 quart;
serves four.*

- 1 large clove garlic**
- 1 piece (1/3 inch long) peeled fresh ginger**
- 1/2 small bulb fennel, cored and cut into large chunks, or 1 small rib celery, cut into large chunks**
- 1 small carrot, peeled and cut into large chunks**
- 1 small parsnip, peeled and cut into large chunks**
- 1 large shallot, cut in half**
- 3 Tbs. unsalted butter**
- 2 tsp. curry powder**
- 1 cup brown lentils, picked over and rinsed**
- 1 qt. homemade or low-salt canned chicken or vegetable broth**
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt; more as needed**
- 1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper; more as needed**

Pulse the garlic and ginger in a food processor until chopped. Add the fennel or celery, carrot, parsnip, and shallot and pulse until coarsely chopped.

Melt 2 Tbs. of the butter in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the chopped vegetables and

cook, stirring, until softened, about 3 minutes. Add the curry powder and cook, stirring, until the curry powder is fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the lentils, broth, salt, and pepper. Bring the soup to a boil over high heat, reduce the heat to maintain a brisk simmer, cover, and cook until the lentils are tender, 25 to 30 minutes.

Transfer 1 1/2 cups of the soup to a blender or a food processor and purée until smooth. Stir the purée back into the soup along with the remaining 1 Tbs. butter. Season to taste with salt and pepper, and adjust the consistency with water, if you like.

Serving suggestion:
Garnish with a dollop of plain whole-milk yogurt and chopped fresh mint or cilantro, or both.



Smoky Eggplant & White Bean Dip with Pita Crisps

Yields 1 1/2 cups dip; serves four to six.

- 5 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil; more for the pan**
- 1 1/2 lb. small eggplant (2 to 3 small), trimmed and cut in half lengthwise**
- 3/4 tsp. plus a generous pinch kosher salt**
- 1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper**
- 2 anchovy fillets (optional)**
- 1 small clove garlic**
- 1 cup canned cannellini beans, drained and rinsed**
- 3 pitas (preferably pocketless), each cut into eight wedges**
- 2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice; more to taste**
- 1 Tbs. chopped fresh mint, plus 1 Tbs. small leaves for garnish**
- 2 tsp. chopped fresh oregano**
- 2 Tbs. pine nuts, toasted**

Position a rack 4 inches from the broiler element and heat the broiler to high. Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil and grease lightly with oil. Rub the eggplant all over with 2 Tbs. of the oil and sprinkle the flesh side with 1/2 tsp. of the salt and the 1/4 tsp. pepper. Arrange the eggplant, flesh side down, on the baking sheet and broil until the skin is charred and the eggplant flesh is very tender, 20 to 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, if using anchovies, mash them into a paste

with the side of a chef's knife. Roughly chop the garlic, sprinkle it with a generous pinch of kosher salt, and mash it into a paste with the side of a chef's knife. Transfer the anchovy and garlic pastes to a food processor and add the beans, 2 Tbs. of the oil, and 1 Tbs. water. Purée until smooth.

When the eggplant is done, set it aside to cool briefly. Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, toss the pita wedges with the remaining 1 Tbs. oil and 1/4 tsp. salt. Arrange in a single layer on a baking sheet. Lower the rack so it's 6 inches from the broiler. Broil the pita wedges until golden brown on both sides, 1 to 2 minutes per side.

Scrape the eggplant flesh from the skin and add the flesh to the puréed beans in the food processor, along with the lemon juice, chopped mint, and oregano. Pulse briefly to form a chunky dip. Adjust the seasoning with more salt, pepper, or lemon juice to taste. Serve sprinkled with the pine nuts and mint leaves, with the toasted pita crisps on the side for dipping.

Serving suggestion:
This is also great with crudités, especially bell peppers and fennel.



Buttermilk Country Fried Chicken with Cucumber Salad

Serves two.

¼ cup halved and very thinly sliced red onion

1 very small clove garlic
Kosher salt

1 Tbs. canola or vegetable oil, plus 1 to 1¼ cups for frying

¾ cup plus 2 Tbs. buttermilk
1½ tsp. fresh lemon juice

1 Tbs. chopped fresh dill
Freshly ground black pepper

½ English cucumber, halved lengthwise, seeded, and thinly sliced crosswise (about 1 heaping cup sliced)

¾ cup all-purpose flour
2 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (about ¾ lb. total), pounded to an even thickness (about ½ inch thick)

Put the onion in a small bowl, cover it with very hot water, and let it sit for 15 minutes. Roughly chop the garlic, sprinkle it with a generous pinch of salt, and mash it into a paste with the side of a chef's knife. In a medium bowl, whisk the mashed garlic, 1 Tbs. oil, 2 Tbs. buttermilk, the lemon juice, dill, ¼ tsp. salt, and a few grinds of pepper. Toss the cucumber in the bowl with the dressing. Drain the onion, toss it with the cucumber

salad, and let sit to allow the flavors to meld.

Put the flour in a shallow bowl and, in another shallow bowl, mix the remaining ¾ cup buttermilk with 1 tsp. salt. Season the chicken with ¾ tsp. salt and ¼ tsp. pepper. Dip the chicken in the buttermilk and then dredge it in the flour. (You can let the chicken sit in the flour while the oil heats; gently shake off excess flour before cooking.)

Choose a skillet (preferably cast iron) that's large enough to fit the chicken. Pour in oil to a depth of ¼ inch (about 1 cup for a 10-inch skillet or 1¼ cups for an 11-inch skillet). Heat over medium-high heat. When the oil is shimmering and the chicken sizzles briskly when a corner is dipped in the oil, cook the chicken until golden brown on both sides, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Transfer the chicken to paper towels and pat lightly to absorb excess oil. Sprinkle the chicken with a pinch of salt and serve it with the cucumber salad.



Steak, Egg & Blue Cheese Salad

Serves four.

1 small clove garlic

Kosher salt

3 Tbs. red-wine vinegar

1½ tsp. Dijon mustard

½ cup plus 1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

Freshly ground black pepper

1 lb. beef sirloin steak tips

2 heads Boston lettuce, washed, spun dry, and torn into bite-size pieces (about 6 cups loosely packed)

4 medium- or hard-cooked eggs (see p. 71), peeled and quartered lengthwise
¾ cup crumbled blue cheese (about 4 oz.)

1 medium carrot, peeled and very thinly sliced crosswise

6 medium red radishes, thinly sliced

¼ cup 1-inch-long sliced fresh chives

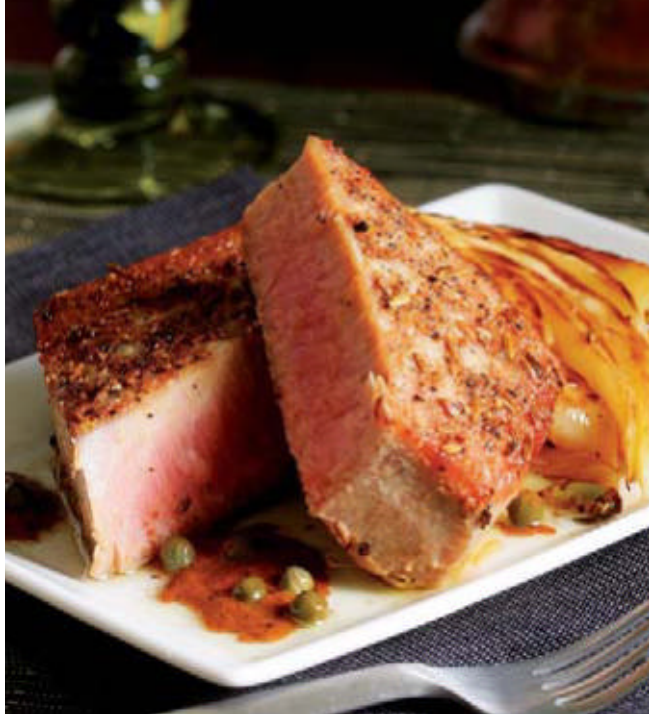
Roughly chop the garlic, sprinkle it with the generous pinch of salt, and mash it into a paste with the side of a chef's knife. Transfer the garlic to a small bowl and whisk in the vinegar and mustard. Whisk in the ½ cup oil in a thin, steady stream. Season the vinaigrette to taste with salt and pepper. Drizzle the sirloin tips with 2 Tbs. of the vinaigrette and let sit while preparing the other salad ingredients. Reserve the remaining vinaigrette for dressing the salad.

Season the meat all over with 1 tsp. salt and ½ tsp. pepper. Heat the remaining 1 Tbs. oil in a 10-inch skillet (preferably cast iron), over high heat. When the oil is shimmering hot, add the meat and sear on both sides until cooked to your liking, about 3 minutes per side for medium rare. Let the meat rest briefly on a cutting board while assembling the salad.

Put the lettuce in a large serving bowl. Whisk the vinaigrette and toss the lettuce with just enough of the vinaigrette to coat. Slice the sirloin tips on the diagonal into ½-inch-thick medallions. Scatter the meat (and any accumulated juices), eggs, cheese, carrot, radishes, and chives on top of the lettuce. Drizzle the toppings with some of the remaining vinaigrette to taste (you may not need it all) and toss gently at the table. Serve any remaining vinaigrette on the side.

Note: If you're willing to brave the elements, this steak is also delicious cooked on the grill.

Tip: If you have a mandoline, use it to cut the carrots and radishes into very thin slices.



Seared Tuna with Fennel Seeds & Caper Brown Butter

Serves four.

1½ Tbs. fresh lemon juice
1 Tbs. capers, drained,
coarsely chopped if large
6 Tbs. unsalted butter, cut
into six pieces
¼ cup heavy cream
4 1-inch-thick tuna steaks
(6 to 8 oz. each)
1 Tbs. fennel seeds, crushed
¾ tsp. kosher salt
½ tsp. freshly ground black
pepper
2 Tbs. vegetable oil

Put the lemon juice and capers in a 1-qt. heatproof measuring cup. Bring the butter and cream to a brisk simmer in a small saucepan over medium heat, whisking often. The mixture will look homogenous at first and then will separate and begin to turn golden brown. Continue to whisk until it turns a dark rust color, about 10 minutes total. Carefully pour the brown butter mixture into the

lemon juice; the butter will boil up and sputter. Whisk to combine and return to the saucepan, off the heat.

Sprinkle the tuna on both sides with the fennel seeds, salt, and pepper. Heat the oil in a 10- to 12-inch heavy skillet (preferably cast iron) over medium-high heat until shimmering hot. Sear the tuna on both sides until done to your liking, about 2 minutes per side for medium rare (still raw in the middle) or 3 minutes per side for medium (just pink in the middle). Transfer the tuna to plates. If necessary, quickly reheat the sauce. Serve the tuna drizzled with the sauce.

Serving suggestion:

This tuna is delicious sprinkled with fresh parsley, and it pairs well with roasted fennel.



Chinese Five-Spice-Crusted Duck Breasts

Serves four.

4 boneless duck breast
halves with skin (2 to
2½ lb.)
1½ tsp. Chinese five-spice
powder
¾ tsp. kosher salt
¼ tsp. freshly ground black
pepper

Trim the visible fat and silver-skin from the flesh side of the duck. If the tenderloins are still on the breasts, leave them on. Don't trim the skin side; simply score the duck skin in a crosshatch pattern to allow the fat to cook out. Mix the five-spice powder with the salt and pepper in a small bowl. Gently rub the duck all over with the mixture.

Heat a 12-inch skillet over medium-low heat and put the duck, skin side down, in the skillet. Slowly render the fat from the skin without moving the duck breasts. After 15 minutes, tilt the pan and carefully spoon off as much fat as possible. Cook until the skin is dark golden brown and crisp, about 25 minutes total.

Flip the breasts with a metal spatula (carefully loosen the skin if it's stuck to the pan). Increase the heat to medium and finish cooking the duck until the second side is golden and the duck is done to your liking, another 3 to 7 minutes, depending on thickness. (An instant-read thermometer should register 135°F for medium doneness, which will still be pink and juicy.)

Transfer the duck breasts to a cutting board and let rest, skin side up, for about 5 minutes before serving either whole or sliced on an angle into medallions.

Serving suggestion:

This duck goes nicely with a wild rice pilaf with toasted almonds and sautéed Asian greens seasoned with a touch of sesame oil.